THE LITURGICAL HERITAGE OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Shadows and Realities

PAUL PALLATH

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*
ACOC	Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Rome
CCEO	*Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches)*
CLC	Central Liturgical Committee
ETJ	*Ephrem's Theological Journal*
OCA	*Orientalia Christiana Analecta*
PCUGM	Pontificale caldeo ad uso della Gerarchia malabarese
PRLS	Pontificale romano in lingua siriaca
RSPC	Revisione e stampa del Pontificale caldeo (a partire della sec. plenaria del 3 luglio 1939)
SMBC	Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference

Enchiridion symbolorum = H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, edizione bilinque, a cura di P. Hünermann, Bologna 1996.

Roman Pontifical into Syriac = P. Pallath and J. Kollara, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac and the Beginning of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church: History of the Revision and Publication of the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Pontifical*, Kottayam 2012.

The Christian Faith = J. Neuner & J. Dupuis (eds)., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, seventh revised and enlarged edition, New York 2001.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Over a period of 18 years (2000-2018) I published 7 books (3 in Italian and 4 in English) and some articles related to the liturgical heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church. The said books are helpful to reconstruct the historical evolution, westernization, restoration and reform, as well as some theological and spiritual dimensions of Syro-Malabar Liturgy. In fact, three of my books, among other things, consider also the history of Syro-Malabar Missal and Ritual respectively.[1]

The present work, most probably my last liturgical contribution, is a collection of seven articles on different aspects of the liturgical heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church, not yet covered by the aforementioned books. Hence my intention is to present those items of Syro-Malabar liturgy, which are not treated in the said books, in order to provide also a brief history of the Order of *Qurbana*, Pontifical, Ritual and Liturgy of the Hours. Since this work is a collection of articles, some repetitions cannot be avoided.

In previous years I published three studies related to inculturation among the St Thomas Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church.[2] The first and last articles of this book are prepared on the basis of these studies. The second article, "The Sacraments of the Church of St Thomas Christians in India and the Synod of Diamper", is a revised and updated version of the study with the same title published in *Ephrem's Theological Journal* in 2007.[3]

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[1] See P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, Kottayam 2008; *Restoration and Reform of Syro-Malabar Qurbana: Important Documents from 1954 to 1969*, Changanacherry 2018; *Unity of Christian Initiation with Special Reference to the Syro-Malabar Church*, Bangalore 2017. The last book contains also the history of Syro-Malabar Ritual.

[2] P. Pallath, "The Syro-Malabar Church and Inculturation", *ETJ*, vol. 4, no. 2 (October 2000) 148-175; "The St Thomas Christian Church before the Sixteenth Century: A Model for Inculturation", *ETJ*, vol. 6, no. 1 (March 2002) 3-32; "Inculturation among the St Thomas Christians", in A. Mekkattukunnel (ed.), *Mar Thoma Margam: The Ecclesial Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 2012, 840-852.

[3] P. Pallath, "The Sacraments of the Church of St Thomas Christians in India and the Synod of Diamper", *ETJ*, vol. 11, no. 2 (October 2007) 121-146.

Important documents on the compilation and promulgation of the Syro-Oriental and Malabar Pontifical were collected and published as a book in 2012 together with Dr. Joseph Kollara.[4] This work practically treats the history of the liturgical reform in the Syro-Malabar Church from the time of the appointment of native bishops in 1896 until the publication and implementation of the restored Pontifical in 1958-1960. Based on this book the third article entitled "Restoration of the Pontifical and the Beginning of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church", is prepared. Since the said book is not available to a wide range of readers, this article is intended to provide succinct information concerning the historical and ecclesiastical context of the beginning of the liturgical reform in the Syro-Malabar Church. Moreover, this article covers the recent history of the Syro-Malabar Pontifical as well.

The next three articles (4-6) are completely new and they respectively treat the history of the restoration and reform of the Liturgy of the Hours, the disputed question of the *Qurbana* facing the people and the fate of the unanimous decision on the uniform mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* in the entire Syro-Malabar Church. The last article, as already indicated, highlight some theological and liturgical principles for authentic and legitimate inculturation in the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Synod of Diamper is quoted, indicating only the number of sessions and decrees, without any reference to the works, in which they have been published. The book ends with a bibliography and an index of relevant themes.

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[4] P. Pallath & J. Kollara, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac and the Beginning of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church: History of the Revision and Publication of the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Pontifical*, Kottayam 2011.

Article One

INCULTURATION AMONG THE ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS IN INDIA AND ITS ERADICATION IN THE SYNOD OF DIAMPER IN 1599

Introduction

Inculturation is a modern expression coined in the second half of the twentieth century, but the reality it signifies has always existed in the Church from the very beginning of Christianity in Jerusalem. This is particularly true of the St Thomas Christians in India, whose forefathers modified only their faith in accepting the Gospel of Christ preached by Apostle St Thomas, but continued to live the same social and cultural life of other people in South India.

For the St Thomas Christians, Christianity was predominantly a way of life (*margam*) to obtain salvation and to reach God the Father, which was wrought by Christ thorough his paschal mysteries, introduced in India by Apostle Thomas (*Thoma margam*) and assiduously practised by their ancestors. The original Asian and Eastern characteristics of Christianity consonant with Indian culture, the autonomy of the St Thomas Christian Church guaranteed by the glorious institutes of archdiaconate and *palliyogam*, as well as the positive and progressive approach of the St Thomas Christians to non Christian religions enabled the spontaneous interaction and organic growth of the Christian faith on Indian soil until the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the beginning of the sixteenth century.[5] In truth the faith-tradition of St Thomas Christian community in South India emerged as one of the "Indian religions", forming an authentically Indian Eastern Christianity.

The purpose of this article is to highlight some examples of authentic "inculturation" among the St Thomas Christians before

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[5] For an accurate exposition of these three theological factors, P. Pallath, "The St Thomas Christian Church before the Sixteenth Century: A Model for Inculturation", 13-18.

the sixteenth century. It should be pointed out from the outset that our intention is only to present the facts, and not to pronounce any judgment on their appropriateness or catholicity. Attempt is also made to demonstrate how the Synod of Diamper (1599) abolished the Indian cultural elements of the Church of St Thomas Christians and estranged it from the indigenous communities, transforming it into a Western form of Christianity.[6]

1. Birth and Christian Initiation

Christian initiation was conducted according to the East Syrian tradition, which consisted of the administration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist in one and single complex ceremony.[7] However, before the Synod of Diamper there existed several Indianized Christian practices in connection with childbirth and baptism. Corresponding to *jatakaranam* of Brahmins, the father of the child used to mix a little honey, ghee and gold and put this mixture into its mouth 36 hours after its birth. The words *Maran Iso Mishiha* (Lord Jesus Christ) and the child's name were whispered into its ears (*Namakarana*). A black thread was tied around the waist of the child on the twenty-eighth day. *Punul* or sacred thread, similar to that worn by Brahmins, was blessed at the baptism of a male child and was put on him, which was removed when the child attained boyhood. Six months after the birth, the rite of *annaprasnam* or feeding the child with boiled rice was observed.[8]

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[6] For the English version of the acts and decrees of the Synod, M. Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar, together with the Synod of Diamper*, London 1694; J. Hough, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, vol. 2, London 1839, 511-683 or Scaria Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, Edamattam 1994. In all these works there is no difference as regards the number of sessions and decrees.

[7] Cf. P. Pallath, *Unity of Christian Initiation with Special Reference to the Syro-Malabar Church*, 16-65.

[8] Cf. P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, London-Bombay 1970, 10; "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", *Ostkirchliche Studien* 8 (1959) 90; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar*

Normally indianized Christian names were given to the infants at the moment of baptism. The family names (surnames) of the St Thomas Christians were in no way different from those of the faithful of other religions in South India. They indianized or rather "keralized" Christian proper names as far as it was possible. For example, Zacharias - Cherian, Cheriachan, Kurian, Kuriachan; Joseph - Aypu, Aypukutty, Ousepachan; Mathew - Mathai, Mathan, Mathachan; Thomas - Umman, Thomman, Thommy, Thomachan, Thomasukutty, Thommikunju; Anne - Annamma, Chinnamma, Annakutty; Mary - Mariam, Mariamma, Mariakutty, Kochumariam. Such proper names correspond to Hindu names such as Ayyappan, Kesavankutty, Sankarankutty, Janakiamma, Saraswathiamma, Karthianiamma, Pankajakshiamma, Lakshmikutty, Sumathikutty, etc.[9]

The Synod of Diamper prohibited the use of the name Jesus, the Old Testament names such as Abraham, Jacob, Zacharias, and "the names of the country" or Indian names if they were found also among the "heathens".[10] Further the Synod strictly proscribed the Christians to give their children or to call them by any names, other than those which were given them when they were baptized.[11] Archbishop Francis Ros completely abolished the Indian names, ordering that only "the names of canonized saints shall be given to the children".[12] In spite of all such prohibitions, some Indianized Christian names, especially Indian family names (surnames) survived among the St Thomas Christians.

Church, Kottayam 1987, 52; J. Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore 2001, 43-44.

[9] Cf. L. K. Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam 1926, 108; S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life among the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala (India): An Appraisal*, Rome 1998, 167.

[10] Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 16.

[11] Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 17.

[12] F. Ros, *Diocesan Statutes,* Bibliotheca Vaticana, *Codex Borgiano Indiano* 18, f. 23.

2. The Matter of the Eucharist: Indian Bread and Wine

From the almost unanimous testimony of the Western missionaries it is certain that before the sixteenth century Indian leavened bread made of wheat or rice was used in the *Qurbana* in Malabar. The bread, freshly baked mixing in it salt and oil, was usually brought to the priest on a fresh leaf just before the offertory. The bread was baked by deacons and minor clerics, with great devotion, reciting psalms, hymns and prayers.[13] As Francis Ros witnessed, one of the main reasons for the departure of the St Thomas Christians and their priests from Cranganore (which in the meantime became a Portuguese centre) was the prohibition to say Mass with the leavened bread.[14]

The Eucharistic wine was prepared from dry grapes or raisins brought from foreign countries. The dry grapes were put in water and then juice was pressed out for consecration.[15] Francis Ros clearly stated that Chaldean Metropolitan Mar Joseph "introduced

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[13] Cf. F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", written in 1604, British Library MS Add. 9853, ff. 86-99, original text with English tr., "A Report on the Serra", in G. Nedungatt (ed.), *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 305 & 331; A. Monserrat, "Información de los christianos de S. Thomé" (A Report to the Jesuit General Fr. Everardo Mercuriano, dated 12 January 1579), in J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. XI (1970) 517; A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes Primaz da India Oriental, Religioso da Ordem de S. Agostinho,* Coimbra 1606, 59; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, Kochi 2003, 239; F. De Sousa, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo*, segunda parte (= II), Lisboa 1710, 120; J. F. Raulin, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo*, Romae 1745, 391.

[14] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 325.

[15] For more about the eucharistic bread and wine, see F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 331; J. F. Raulin, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo*, 387 & 391; A.Valavanthara, *India in 1500 AD: The Narratives of Joseph the Indian*, Kottayam 1984, 175; J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A. D.", in G. Menacherry (ed.), *The Thōmapēdia*, Ollur 2000, 115-116; J. Vellian, "An Eastern and Indianized Liturgy", *Christian Orient*, vol. I, no. 2 (1980) 16-18; P. Vazheeparampil, "The *Toma Marga*, Icon of the Indo-Oriental Identity of the Thomas Christians of India", *Christian Orient*, vol. XV, no. 1 (1994) 9-10.

the hosts and wine from Portugal. Formerly they used to squeeze raisins, and with the liquid coming out of them, they used to say the Mass".[16] In spite of a few sporadic references to products like wine of palms or coconut sap, based on the general opinion of the missionaries it can be established with certainty that before the sixteenth century the St Thomas Christians generally used wine made out of dried grapes or raisins for Eucharistic celebration. According to Jacob Vellian, "In the absence of vineyards in India this looks like a typical adaptation. One may also note that Malabar does not grow wheat. And hence the use of rice flour is also understandable".[17]

Under pressure from the missionaries, already Metropolitan Mar Joseph Sulaqa (1555-1569) had introduced unleavened bread of wheat and Portuguese wine for the Eucharistic celebration.[18] The Synod of Diamper determined that the matter of the Holy Eucharist is

> bread of wheat, and wine of grape only; so that all who consecrate in bread made of rice, or of anything else but the flour of wheat, or of wine that was not pressed out of the ripe grape of the vine do not make the sacrament".[19]

The Synod further ordered the vicars to take care to be always provided of the flour of wheat for making hosts "which they must be sure not to mix with anything else, as is done commonly in other bread, for fear there should be no consecration therein [...]. The same care shall be taken of the wine that it be no other than that of Portugal", and that "it be not mixed with the juice of raisins, or with any other wines of the country for the same danger".[20] The Synod requested the king of Portugal to send sufficient wine annually for the celebration of the Eucharist.[21]

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[16] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 331.

[17] J. Vellian, "An Eastern and Indianized Liturgy", 17-18.

[18] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 331; cf. also F. De Sousa, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo* II, 120.

[19] Synod of Diamper, Session V, part 2, preliminary decree.

[20] Synod of Diamper, session V, part 2, decree 7.

[21] Synod of Diamper, session V, part 2, decree 9.

As stated above, Portuguese wine began to be used for the Eucharistic celebration several years before the Synod of Diamper. Since the wine was brought from Portugal at long intervals, some priests used to keep it for a long time in glass bottles, with the danger of the wine turning into vinegar. Hence the "Synod in the strictest manner that it can, does command, that in every church there shall be in the vicar's keeping a sweet pipe, or small runlet of wood or a flask, in which the wine for the Masses shall be kept and that the vicars be extremely careful, that the wine do not decay or turn into vinegar, which if it should happen so as to have lost the essence of wine [...] they shall not celebrate therewith, it being a great sacrilege to do it, seeing there can be no consecration".[22]

Based on the testimonies of Western missionaries, as well as on the acts and decrees of the Synod of Diamper we can rightly conclude that before the XVI century leavened bread was used for the Eucharistic celebration. Similarly in the particular circumstances of that epoch wine made out of dried grapes or raisins was used.

3. Indian Rite of Penance

Among the St Thomas Christians in India, communitarian penitence was very common, though the practice of individual confession was not absent.[23] The Indian manner of administering the sacrament of penance was called *pizhamoolal* in the vernacular, which consisted of private confession and absolution by a priest, who also determined appropriate penance.[24]

In addition to the rite of reconciliation in the Holy *Qurbana*, there existed different forms of communitarian reconciliatory service, which were greatly influenced by the Jewish, Buddhist and

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[22] Synod of Diamper, session V, part 2, decree 8.

[23] Cf. J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A. D.", 116; P. Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, Rome 1998, 188-189.

[24] Cf. M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", in A. G. Kollamparampil & J. Perumthottam (eds.), *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom*, Changanassery 1997, 370; *Ecclesial Response in the Negativity in Human Life*, Kottayam 1996, 346-347.

Hindu rituals. First of all, there was the penitential rite of incense, which consisted of public confession of sins, putting incense in a furnace in the middle of the church before the altar, embracing the smoke with the hands folded in the form of a cross over the chest and general absolution by a priest with the prescribed prayers.[25]

There existed also different Indianized variations of the East Syrian rite of *Hoosaya* in Malabar. The penitents asked forgiveness to the priests, who used to read certain Biblical passages and said the prayer of absolution. For grave sins, after hearing confession and giving the penance, the priests led the penitents to the Bishop for absolution.[26] This can be compared to the reserved sins according to the modern canonical terminology. According to the Malabar tradition, public delinquents, apostates and sinners had to undergo the penance imposed upon them by the parish *yogam* (assembly). Afterwards they would be individually absolved at the door of the church by a priest.[27] The Synod of Diamper abolished all these forms of penance and prescribed the individual private confession as the only valid means of obtaining forgiveness of sins from God.[28]

4. Priesthood: Optional Celibacy, Malpanate

In the pre-Diamper period celibacy was optional among the priests of St Thomas Christians. The diocesan priests were generally married. This custom was in harmony with the Eastern discipline and the Hindu (and Muslim) traditions in India. The Hindu "priests" were generally married, although there were some

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[25] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes,* 58-59; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes,* 238; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, Bangalore 1939, 177; M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", 370.

[26] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VI, decrees 14 & 15.

[27] Cf. Paulino da S. Bartholomaeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, Roma 1796, 137; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church,* Alleppey 1976, 106; *The Thomas Christians*, 96; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 42; L. K. Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of Syrian Christians*, 133.

[28] See Article Two, no. 2.3.

religious (*sannyasi)* who were unmarried. In fact, according to the Indian tradition, *sannyasa* (a life of total renunciation) is the fourth stage of *chaturasrama*, of which the first three stages are studenthood (*brahmacharya*), family life (*grahastha*) and hermitage (*vanaprastha*). The Synod of Diamper "desiring to restore this church to its purity, and the usage of the Roman Church" abolished the Eastern discipline of married clergy (optional celibacy) and imposed the Latin discipline of obligatory celibacy.[29] The diocesan statutes promulgated in 1606 by Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin archbishop of the St Thomas Christians (1599-1624), reiterated and perpetuated the norms established by the Synod of Diamper (1599) concerning obligatory celibacy.[30]

The system of education prevalent in India was *Gurukula Vidyabyasam,* according to which the students selected an illustrious *Guru* or master and resided with him throughout the training period. For the education and formation of those aspiring to the priesthood, the Thomas Christians developed their own institution called *malpanate* adapting the system of Hindu *Gurukula Vidyabyasam*. Malpanate comes from the Syriac word *malpana* which means master, teacher or guru. Malpanate can be described as a system of training of the students to priesthood under an elderly priest who is reputed for his learning, nobility and holiness of life. In addition to intellectual, spiritual and liturgical formation, a life of austerity, simplicity, poverty and obedience was practised in the *malpanates*. This *malpanate* helped very much to ensure transmitting the Eastern identity and ecclesial traditions of the St Thomas Christians to successive generations.[31]

The *malpanate* system became definitively extinct during the governance of the Vicar Apostolic Bernardine of St Theresa (1853-

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[29] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VII, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders*, decrees 16-18; cf. also F. Ros, *Diocesan Statutes,* Vatican Library, *Codex Borgiano Indiano* 18, ff.100-101.

[30] Cf. F. Ros, *Diocesan Statutes, Codex Borgiano Indiano* 18, ff.100-101.

[31] J. Pallikaparampil, "Formation of the Clergy in the Syro-Malabar Church", *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Held in the Vatican from 8 to 16 January 1996 (edited by J. Porunnedom), Kochi 1996, 237. Cf. also S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life,*173.

1868) who denied ordination to those who were formed in the *malpanate*. Afterwards he suppressed all the *malpanates* in Malabar and thus forced the St Thomas Christian candidates to priesthood to be trained in any of the seminaries conducted by the Western missionaries.[32]

5. Indian Rite of Extreme Unction

The sacrament of Extreme Unction as understood in the West in the second millennium did not exist among the St Thomas Christians.[33] However, they had their own Indian rite of conferring the grace of the same sacrament on the sick faithful.

The priests blessed the sick or imposed their hands on them with appropriate prayers, read Gospel passages over them and placed upon their bodies verses from the Holy Bible written on palm leaf or paper. Sometimes the sick were given water to drink in which was mixed some earth taken from the tomb of the Apostle Thomas.[34] The placing of the Gospel passages on the body of the sick may be an imitation of the Hindu practice of wearing on the body palm leaf on which a kind of prayer *(mantra)* has been written.[35] The Synod of Diamper abolished this Indian rite and ordered the administration of Extreme Unction according to the Latin rite.[36]

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[32] Cf. A. Kanjirathinkal, *A Church in Struggle,* Bangalore 1984, 110-115; see also G. T. Mackenzie, "History of Christianity in Travancore", in Nagam Aiya (ed.), *The Travancore State Manuel*, vol. 2, New Delhi-Madras 1989, 198.

[33] Cf. Article Two, no, 2.4.

[34] Cf. P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 100-101; *The Thomas Christians*, 88-89; J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A. D." 116; J. Vellian, "The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church", in G. Nedungatt (ed.), *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 182; P. Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 189-190 & 225; L. Arangassery, "The Anointing of the Sick, Eastern Perspectives", 392-393.

[35] J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A.D.", 116.

[36] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VI, *Extreme Unction*, decree 1; cf. also Article Two, no. 2.4.

6. Indian Rite of Marriage

Although the St Thomas Christians followed the East Syrian liturgical tradition, they developed an "Indian rite" of marriage, adapting and Christianizing the religious and cultural items of Brahmin marriage ceremonies in South India. They adapted many Hindu rites and other indigenous customs such as the manner of engagement, the tradition of arranged marriage and the system of dowry from their contemporary society, while keeping intact the specificity of Christian matrimony and what was necessary for the validity of the sacrament.

As in the case of Hindu marriage, preparations at home consisted of *kalamezhutu* (designs made by sprinkling rice flour inside the pavilion erected in front of the house) *anthamcharthu* (the ceremonial dressing of the bridegroom's hair), ceremonial bath, *mylanchiyidal* (anointing the feet of the bride with *mylanchi,* a herbal plant) and *madhuram kodukkal* (feeding the bride and groom with sweets). After the ceremonies in the Church, all celebrations at home such as the sprinkling of *nellum nirum,* entering the house with the right foot, *madhuram kodukal* (distribution of sweets) and all other social festivities were the same as those of their non-Christian brethren.[37]

The essential religious rite of marriage in the church consisted of the blessing and tying of the *thali or minnu.* The *thali,* a small golden cross of 21 minute beads around, which the bridegroom tied to the bride's neck during the marriage celebration, was a praiseworthy adaptation of Brahmin marriage ceremony. The thread for tying the *thali* was drawn out from the *manthrakody,* a new cloth (at present a *sari*), which was blessed by the priest

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[37] For more details about these items and many other social and cultural customs connected with the celebration of marriage, see Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 198-209; P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 101-102; *Thomas Christians*, 89-91; L. K. Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, 70-118; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 54-57; J. Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 46-48; L. Edakalathur, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, 150-161; P. Vazheeparampil, "The *Toma Marga*", 12-15.

during the celebration. In fact the tying of the *thali* was considered the most important and solemn act of the marriage rite so much so that marriage itself was often called *thalikettu*, *minnukettu* or *pennukettu*, namely tying of the *thali* or simply tying a woman. A married man was called as one who had tied and a married woman as one who was tied. Immediately after tying the *thali* the bridegroom put over the head of the bride the *manthrakody* (the nuptial garment), which was a symbol of commitment and protection.[38] Once the *thali* or *minnu* was tied on the neck of the woman, she was supposed to wear it until the death of her husband. It was the symbol of unity and indissolubility of marriage, as well as of love, fidelity and communion among the spouses.[39]

The Synod of Diamper prohibited many of the Indian marriage customs and traditions of the St Thomas Christians as "devilish, superstitious and heathenish ceremonies".[40] Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin archbishop of the St Thomas Christians, in his *Report on the Serra* in 1604, that is, about four years after the Synod of Diamper, gives the following information about the marriage ceremonies among the St Thomas Christians:

> [...] when there was a priest close by they called him always and celebrated the wedding before witnesses. But the other weddings not done in this manner were also considered valid, if the custom of the land was observed. That is, the groom ties a thread on the neck of the bride and he covers her head with a drape as a sign of subjection. There are also other signs of entrusting a person to another; each places some grains of rice in the other's hand, which is a sign of complete self-commitment. Although this one with rice

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[38] Cf. P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 101; *Thomas Christians*, 90; C. Payngot, "The Syro-Malabar Marriage", in G. Farnedi (ed.), *La celebrazione cristiana del matrimonio: simboli e testi (Studia Anselmiana* 93), Roma 1986, 266-267; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 56; L. Edakalathur, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, 158; P. Pallath, *Matrimonio tra cristiani indiani: il rito nella Chiesa siro-malabarese*, Città del Vaticano 2009, 69-73.

[39] V. Palathingal, *Consortium Totius Vitae: Essence and Form of Marital Relationship in the Malabar Church*, Alwaye 1992, 104-108; P. Pallath, *Matrimonio tra cristiani indiani: il rito nella Chiesa siro-malabarese*, 69-71.

[40] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VII, *Sacrament of Matrimony*, decrees 14-16.

> and other superstitions which these Christians had at the weddings have been abolished, nevertheless, the tying of the thread on the neck has survived. For it is a custom of the land, for which the Malabars in their language call the Marriage *Pennukettu*,, that is, tying a woman [...].[41]

In spite of five hundred years of westernization the St Thomas Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church have not abandoned Christianized Indian elements like the use of *thali* or *minnu* and *manthrakody*, although the use of ring has been introduced in some places.

7. Indigenous Holy Oils

According to the common tradition of the Churches of the East and West olive oil is used for sacramental anointing. In the Assyrian Church of the East pure olive oil (horn of oil), always kept in the Church, is still used for the ceremony of mixing during the consecration of oil for the baptismal anointing and for the post-baptismal anointing, which corresponds to confirmation in the West. Following the renewal of full communion with Rome by John Simon Sulaqa in 1553 the Chaldean Catholic Church continued to use olive oil for the two pre-baptismal anointings, but began to use the holy myron (perfumed ointment, namely olive oil mixed with various aromatic substances), blessed by the bishop, for the post-baptismal anointing, reciting the formula adopted from the Latin rite of confirmation.[42]

Since olive tree did not grow in South India and olive oil could not be imported, before the sixteenth century the St Thomas Christians used the oil of coconut, palm or sesame for the

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[41] F. Ros, "Relação sobre a Serra", 333-335.

[42] Cf. G. P. Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, vol. 2, London 1852, 212-213; A. Raes, "Où se trouve la confirmation dans le rite syro-oriental?", *L'Orient Syrien* 1 (1956) 248; I. H. Dalmais, „Die Sakramente: Theologie und Liturgie", in *Handbuch der Ostkirchenkunde*, Düsseldorf 1971, 425; J. Madey, „Die Riten der ‚Initiatio christiana' bei den Ostsyrern oder Chaldäern", *Kyrios* 10 (1970) 108, footnote 37.

aforementioned sacramental anointing.[43] This could be considered as an example of legitimate inculturation consonant with the situation in South India. The Synod of Diamper abolished the use of indigenous oils and introduced the use of three different kinds of holy oils according to the Latin custom: the oil of catechumens, holy chrism and the oil of the sick.[44]

8. Death and Burial

Although the liturgical ceremony of burial was conducted according to the East Syrian rite, the local customs in connection with death, burial and commemoration of the death were adopted by the St. Thomas Christians. The dying person was laid on a bed facing the east and the people around would chant prayers. The corps was washed in warm water and anointed a few hours after death. The St Thomas Christians adopted and Christianized many socio-cultural practices connected with death and burial from their Hindu brethren such as repast (*pattnikanji*) after the burial for breaking the fast, mourning for eight days, ritual bath eleventh day after burial (*pulakkuli*) for purification from defilement due to contact with a deceased person, commemoration of the dead and anniversary celebration for the dead (*chatham or sradham*).[45] Francis Ros beautifully described the practice of the St Thomas Christians in this regard:

> They are very observant in celebrating the anniversaries of their dead. On that day they give much alms, invite the priests, who after praying at the grave go to the house where they are given meals. After that they recite other responsorials. As a sign of mourning they let the beard grow and do not go to the secular feasts. They fast

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[43] Cf. E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 52 & 166; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, 177.

[44] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session IV, decrees 8 & 14; A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 72; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 291.

[45] Cf. P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 101-102; "The Thomas Christians and Adaptation", *Eastern Churches Review* 111 (1970) 175; *Thomas Christians*, 92; J. Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 49-50; P. Vazheeparampil, "The *Toma Marga*", 20.

> for forty days following the death of a person. The priest goes every day to the grave to pray and afterwards go to the house to eat, where also he recites some responsorials. After the fortieth day, they perform the same ceremony once every thirty days till completing one year. On the anniversaries, the Fortieths and the Thirtieths, they use incense both at the grave and at the house of the deceased.[46]

All the aforementioned ceremonies were in name and nature Hindu, but Christianized by the prayers and blessings of the priests. Among the evil and superstitious customs which were to be totally extirpated and utterly abolished the Synod of Diamper explicitly indicated the washing of dead corpses and many other social ceremonies indicated above.[47]

9. Religious Feasts and Processions

For the celebration of religious feasts the St Thomas Christians followed the East Syrian calendar, though with some Indian additions. Evidently the saints commemorated before the Synod of Diamper were those of the Church of the East, since the St Thomas Christians did not have their own saints. In the opinion of Joseph Neelankavil, "although the pre-seventeenth century feasts themselves were partly influenced by the Chaldean rule, these had already been adapted, modelled and updated to the local needs and traditions, so much so one could say that the Thomas Christians were then observing their own feasts".[48]

In connection with Hindu festivals and temple feasts, solemn worship, processions, festal solemnities and cultural programmes were conducted. The St Thomas Christians also organized their festivals exactly like the Hindus. In the main feast of the parish church all people of the village or town participated. The decorations for such feasts, the paraphernalia used in the church, especially for the processions such as decorative silk umbrellas,

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[46] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 337; a similar description can be found also in Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, Venezia 1678, 153.

[47] Cf. Synod of Dimper, session IX, decree 1.

[48] J. Neelankavil, "Feasts of the Thomas Christians", in G. Menacherry (ed.), *The Thōmāpēdia*, Ollur 2000, 112.

musical instruments, special torches, bells, *cadinas*, pop-guns were all adaptations of Hindu customs. Hence the church processions externally looked like Hindu festal processions. Even the custom of borrowing and lending processional paraphernalia from and to the Hindu temples was in vogue.[49] In church processions it was very often the non-Christians who played musical instruments like trumpets, drums and bands. In connection with the main feast of the parish cultural programmes such as *Margamkali*, *Parichumuttukali*, etc. were performed.

Since mutual collaboration and harmony existed between Christians and Hindus, the former also participated in the socio-cultural programmes conducted on the occasion of common Hindu festivals in South India like *Onam*, *Vishu*, etc. The Synod of Diamper enjoined that

> all Christian faithful of the bishopric, in holy obedience and upon pain of excommunication not to presume resort to this (*Onam*) or any other heathen festivity, though there should be no ceremony belonging to a pagod therein [...] but Christians shall only observe their own holy festivities among themselves, and that with a due moderation and decency, as becomes the professors of the law of Christ, without having anything to do with the superstitious festivals of the heathens, which are dedicated to the honour of the devil [...].[50]

After the Synod of Diamper the participation of Christians in Hindu festivities gradually disappeared and the mutual collaboration for the organization of feasts greatly diminished, although some immemorial local customs survived.

10. Indian Manner of Fast and Abstinence

Abstinence, asceticism and penance or austerity (*tapas*) are characteristic features of Indian religious life. According to the Indian conception, penance is absolutely necessary to reach the final state of perfection. Indians try to reach this stage by

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[49] P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 99; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 31-32.

[50] Synod of Diamper, session IX, decree 4.

meditation, mortification of the flesh and all the senses, and by complete abnegation. Asceticism consists in leading a hard and austere life, in rigorous, almost continuous fasting and in voluntary, self-inflicted punishments.[51] Inspired by the customs of their Hindu brethren, the St Thomas Christians also observed very many fasts. In fact, more than half of the days of the year were days of fasting for them. It is no wonder that the missionary Francis Dionysius called them "friends of fasts".[52]

The principal fasts of the St Thomas Christians before the Synod of Diamper were: the fast of the period of Annunciation and Nativity, from the Sunday before the first December until Christmas, 24 days; the fast of Ninivites, which began 18 days before the Great Lent, 3 days; the fast of Great Lent, which began on Monday, 50 days before the feast of Resurrection; the "fast of the Apostles", after the feast of Pentecost, 50 days; the fast before the Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary, from 1 to 14 August; the fast before the feast of the Nativity of Mary, from 1 to 7 September, a special fast kept by women; the fast before the feast of Transfiguration, 14 days; Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year; the vigils of some other important feasts like Christmas, Pentecost, Ascension, patron saints, etc.

On fast days and during the whole period of Lent, in addition to abstinence from meat, the St Thomas Christians had the laudable custom "of eating neither eggs nor cheese, nor anything made of milk, nor of fish, and of abstaining totally from wine, and from their wives".[53] Francis Ros also confirmed the strict and rigorous manner of fasting among the St Thomas Christians:

> On fast days they do not eat fish nor milk products; in no case will they drink wine. Neither will they eat certain leaves which soothe

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[51] A. Thekkudan, "Sources of Spirituality of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period", in B. Puthur (ed.), *The Life and Nature of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period*, Kochi 2000, 134; J. Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 152-155.

[52] F. Dionysio, "Informação da cristandade de São Thomé que está no Malavar, reino da India Oriental", in J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. XI, Romae 1970, 141.

[53] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 11.

> the stomach so that a person can remain a whole day without feeling hungry. They chew them mixed with *chunambo* and a fruit which they call *areca*. To forgo those leaves is a torture for them, and so they do it in times of fasting. On such days their food is rice with herbs and vegetables [...]. On the days of fast it is the custom for the married persons to remain apart. The same they do on the great festivities and on Wednesdays and Fridays of every week [...].[54]

Inculturating the Hindu traditions of the time, the Christians also took a bath before the beginning of the fast. For the observance of fasts and abstinence the day was computed from evening (sunset) to evening, in conformity with the computation of Divine Office in the East Syrian tradition.[55]

The Synod of Diamper abolished the bath in connection with the fast as a heathenish superstition and commanded

> the observers of all such superstitions to be punished severely by the prelate, as followers of heathenish vanities, condemned by holy mother Church, earnestly desiring that all such things may be totally rooted out of the hearts of very infidels in this diocese.[56]

Furthermore the Synod required that fast and abstinence are to be observed from midnight to midnight, conforming to the Western custom.[57] During the succeeding years of Western governance the Indian way of fast and abstinence was almost completely obliterated and Western customs were introduced.[58]

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[54] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 337-339; about fasts similar descriptions can be found in F. Dionysio, "Informação da cristandade de São Thomé", 141; A. Monserrat, "Información de los christianos de S. Thomé, 518-519; Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, 156; A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 59; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 242.

[55] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decrees 11, 13 & 16.

[56] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 13.

[57] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 16.

[58] Cf. C. Payngot, "Some Particular Elements in the Liturgical Tradition of the St. Thomas Christians", in P. Pallath (ed.), *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994, 266-171.

11. Indian Architecture of Churches and Houses

Once ensured the dignity of the "house of God" and the suitability for the liturgical celebration, the architecture and style of the temples of the country can be adopted for church-buildings. The St Thomas Christians acted on this principle from very ancient times. Maintaining the internal basic structure necessary for the celebration of the East Syrian liturgy, they developed an authentic church-architecture in Kerala which was so Indian that in the pre-Portuguese period, Hindu temples and Christian church buildings were hardly distinguishable from the outside except for the cross on the top of the church. The churches of this period had all the essentials of a Hindu temple.[59] Moreover, there was also a (granite) cross in front of important Christian churches, which distinguished them from the Hindu buildings for worship. On the pedestal and steps of such crosses people lighted oil lamps and conducted prayers and processions.[60] With regard to the pre-Portuguese churches and the nature of the crosses Antonio De Gouvea wrote:

> [...] The old churches were all built like the temples of the gentiles, but all full of crosses like those of the miracle of S. Thome (Mylapore), which they call cross of Saint Thomas, from which it can be seen how more old is the veneration of this Cross, and affection and its way, than the time when it was found by the Portuguese; for the old churches built by these Christians many years before the Portuguese came out to India, were all adorned by them both with painting and with sculpture.[61]

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[59] For details, P. Maniyattu, *Heaven on Earth: The Theology of Liturgical Spacetime in the East Syrian Qurbana*, Rome 1995, 140-184; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 86; J. Menacherry, "Thomas Christian Architecture", in G. Menacherry (ed.), *The Thōmapēdia*, Ollur 2000, 142-144; A. Athapilly, "Kerala Church Architecture", in G. Menacherry (ed.), *The Thōmapēdia*, 151-152; L. K. Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, 150.

[60] Cf. Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, 144.

[61] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 60; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes*, 244-245; see also pages 315-316.

Francis Ros, the well-informed missionary and the first Latin bishop of the St Thomas Christians confirmed: "They are very pious and have great veneration for the cross, which they make in the manner of the legacy of St. Thomas, the ends of the four arms divided into three leaves of the lily".[62] From the report of the missionaries it is evident that the distinguishing emblem of the ancient Christian churches was the presence of the St Thomas crosses, which were gradually replaced by Portuguese crosses and crucifixes. With regard to the internal Eastern structure of the pre-Portuguese churches Ros reported:

> The temples which these Christians had built before the arrival of the Portuguese were in the style of the Greeks. The main chapel is rather narrow with a small altar in the centre built on to the wall at the East end. On the left there is a closet with a small door to the West and in this place they used to baptize. Besides they have another closet on the North side, or otherwise they have a place on the floor above the main chapel, where they make the hosts in the manner the Greeks make them, reciting a certain number of Psalms while making them. Through an opening in the centre of the floor above the main chapel they would let down that bun with great solemnity. They have no chasuble. They have a veil which covers the door of the main chapel, which they open and close at certain times when they say Mass [...].[63]

From this description one can understand that although the external appearance of the churches was like the Hindu temples, the internal structure was suitable for the celebration of the East Syrian liturgy. Just like the Hindu temples the ancient churches had a walled-in compound with small granite lamps inside and outside the walls. The Christians poured oil and lighted these lamps daily. Adjacent to the church there were *ayudappura* (house of arms) *kottupura* (music hall), *uttupura* (refectory), *kodimaram* (flag staff) and pools or wells for washing feet before entering the church.[64]

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[62] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 327.

[63] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 305.

[64] Cf. A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 47-50; J. Menacherry, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 146-147.

The architecture of the houses of the St Thomas Christians was in no way different from that of their high caste Hindu brethren. They had obtained the privileges of *Padippura* (gate-house) *Arappura* (granary) and *ankanam* (courtyard). According to the Indian science of architecture, they were having *ettukettu* (houses with eight halls around the *ankanam)* or *nalukettu* (houses of four halls).[65]

After the arrival of the Western missionaries the churches began to be built according to Portuguese architecture both with regard to the external structure and the internal arrangement for celebration. Already during the governance of the Chaldean Metropolitan Mar Jacob (1503-1550) churches began to be constructed in the Western architectural style with façade and tower so that they might look different from the Hindu temples built in the South Indian architectural style.[66] The Synod of Diamper did not legislate on the matter, since the Western architecture had already been introduced. The churches are built even today in the Western manner, though in some places new Indian models have begun to appear.

12. Indian Christian Art

Sacred art, which manifests the glory and beauty of God and which attests to the liturgical theology of the particular Church, turns the attention of the Christian faithful to the omnipotent, creating an atmosphere of prayer and meditation in the church. Although the veneration of statutes was unknown to the St Thomas Christians before the Synod of Diamper, Indian Christian art was sufficiently developed among them. Ancient rock baptismal fonts, the granite angular lamp stands, open-air granite crosses, decoration of the walls, doors and pavements of the churches, the paraphernalia used in the churches such as vessels, lamps,

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[65] A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 31.

[66] Letter of Fr Lourenco de Goes to the King of Portugal on 28 December 1536, in A. Silva Rego, *Documentação para a historia das missões do Padroado português do Oriente*, vol. 2, 244; J. Kollaparambil, "The Impact of the Synod of Diamper on the Ecclesial Identity of the St Thomas Christians", in G. Nedungatt (ed.), *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 156.

umbrellas, decorated crosses used for processions etc., are all examples of Indian Christian art. According to George Menacherry, "The oldest depiction of the national bird peacock, the national flower lotus, and even the national animal tiger in Kerala art is found in churches".[67] In some of the ancient churches and adjacent buildings, now under the custody of the Malankara Orthodox Churches, one can still find the pre-Portuguese Indian Christian art and architecture. The St Thomas Cross is the most ancient Indianized Christian symbol, which testifies to the inculturation of the Christian faith on Indian soil.

In a land of idols, during the pre-Portuguese period the churches of the St Thomas Christians could be distinguished from the Hindu temples because of the absence of images. The Synod of Diamper decreed that the images of our Lord, our Lady the glorious Virgin Mary, the holy angels and saints "painted after our manner" are to be placed in churches, altars, and in all adjacent places as well as in the houses of Christian faithful, and they are to be "reverenced and adored with due veneration, and with the same that is due to the person they represent".[68] The Synod again ordered that after the construction of new churches "the first work that shall be done after that of the baptismal font out of the alms of the parish shall be to set up some images, according to the directions of the prelate, who shall always be consulted about every picture".[69]

During the succeeding years of Latin jurisdiction, the churches of the Catholic St Thomas Christians began to be filled with various kinds of statutes, images and "idols", made in the Western manner, with the consequent gradual, but almost complete disappearance of Indian art from their churches. The practice of filling the churches with statues and images continues uninterruptedly even today. At present only Western art is found in most of the places of worship in the Syro-Malabar Church.

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[67] G. Menacherry, "Social Life and Customs of the St. Thomas Christians in the Pre-Diamper Period", in B. Puthur (ed.), *The Life and Nature of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period*, Kochi 2000, 194.

[68] Synod of Diamper, session III, decree I, chapter XI.

[69] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 29.

Recently sporadic attempts have been made in some places to invent new forms of Indian Christian and Eastern art.

13. Indian Liturgical Vestments and Insignia of the Clergy

For the Eucharistic celebration the priests dressed in a large piece of Indian cloth in the form of an amice, a stole and a mantle. However, metropolitan Mar Joseph Sulaqa (1555-1569), constrained by the missionaries, introduced the Western liturgical vestments. With regard to this Francis Ros affirms:

> When they say Mass they put on an alb, which in the front and in the back has some crosses. Over it they put on a stole made in the form of a cross in front of the chest. Over it they put on a mantle which covers their head without blocking their eyes and face, but covers the whole body. Lifting up its brims with both hands, as in lifting the Portuguese surplice, the hands are made free; and so they say Mass. Mar Joseph who governed this Christianity before Mar Abraham removed this rite and introduced the amice and the other sacred vestments of the Roman usage.[70]

The Synod of Diamper did not explicitly order the use of Roman liturgical vestments during the Eucharistic celebration, because from the time of Mar Joseph, the priests were accustomed to do so. However, the Synod commanded that out of the alms of the parish, Archbishop Menezes might provide all the churches, especially the poor ones, with holy vestments, so that none might be without them.[71] Evidently the vestments thus provided were of the Roman Church and hence after the Synod there was no church without such vestments. Similarly the Latin surplice and stole were unknown to the St Thomas Christians. Hence the Synod ordered:

> [...] whereas hitherto there has been no such thing as a surplice in this bishopric, the most reverend Metropolitan having been pleased to provide such vestments as are necessary, no vicar shall go from

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[70] F. Ros, *"Relação sobre a Serra"*, 331.

[71] Synod of Diamper, session V, part 2, decree 7.

> hence without taking a surplice along with him, which he is to wear in the administration of the holy sacraments [...].[72]

Antonio De Gouvea attested that on the last day of the Synod each parish priest was given a consecrated altar stone, a small box with vases of holy oils and a surplice for the correct administration of the sacraments.[73]

The priests of the St Thomas Christian Church had an Indian clerical dress of their own consisting of long loose pants and long loose shirts with a sailor's collar. Their tonsure was different from that of Latins, shaving all around the bottom part of the head, with a tuft of hair on the upper part, like the *Nambudhiris* of Kerala. All grew beards.[74] Some had long beards and long hair like the Hindu *sanyasi* (religious). The Synod of Diamper granted liberty to the elderly priests who already had beards, but stipulated that the

> young shall not suffer their beards to grow, but shall still keep them shaved, and they that wear them very long, shall take care to cut off the hair, that grows near their lips, so that they may not be a hindrance to their receiving the blood of the cup in the Mass, by being so long as to touch it.[75]

Further the Synod "in virtue of obedience and upon pain of excommunication" ordered that all clerics have to wear the habit, tonsure and shaved crown like other ecclesiastics (that is like the Latin clergy) and not long hair after the fashion of the laity.[76]

14. Indian Holy Water

The St Thomas Christians had their own manner of making the holy water. They threw a little clay, brought from the tomb of

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[72] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 22; cf. also session IV, decree 14.

[73] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 72; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes*, 291.

[74] Cf. P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 89; S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life*, 175; K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, vol. 2, 41-42.

[75] Synod of Diamper, session VII, decree 12.

[76] Synod of Diamper, session VII, decree 14.

St Thomas in Mylapore or from some other holy places relating to him, into natural water and thus made it holy. The Synod of Diamper observed:

> [...] the holy water that has been hitherto made use of in this diocese has not been blessed by the priest, nor by any prayer of the church, the sextons only throwing a little of the clay into it, that is brought by pilgrims from the sepulchre of St. Thomas, or from some other holy place relating to him, and where such clay has been wanting, the said sextons have thrown some grains of incense into it: whereupon without any further consecration, it has been esteemed holy: therefore the Synod does declare, that such water is not holy, and that the faithful ought not to make use of it.[77]

The Synod commanded all priests to bless the said water "by throwing holy salt into it, according to the custom of the universal Church, as is directed by the Roman ceremonial, translated into Syriac".[78] About four years after the Synod of Diamper, Francis Rose SJ wrote: "The use of the holy water is very ancient in this Christianity. Once they made it with incense, not with salt as we do, although now they use the Latin rite in making holy water".[79]

15. Offerings (*Nerchakal*)

Among the St Thomas Christians there was the custom of making offerings in the church especially during festivals and the main feast of the parish in fulfilment of some promise made (*nercha*) to obtain some particular grace (*anugraha*) from God. Sometimes even Hindus made such offerings in famous churches.[80] These offerings consisted mainly of money or eatables such as rice boiled with coconut, milk-pudding, edibles or sweets prepared from rice flour and plantain. As Sreedhara Menon points out,

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[77] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 17.

[78] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 17.

[79] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 337.

[80] J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India, Volume II, From the Middle of the Sixteenth Century to the End of the Seventeenth Century*, Bangalore 1988, 89 & 139.

a sample analysis of the *nerchas* in the churches shows their variety and also their resemblance to the *Vazhipadus* offered by Hindus in their temples in some respects.[81]

The food *nercha*, blessed by the priest, were distributed among the people and all of them, without any distinction of rich and poor, used to eat them with devotion. This corresponded to a certain extent to the Hindu *prasadam*. The practice of food *nercha* still continues especially in connection with some particular feasts.

16. Pilgrimages

Going on pilgrimages and visiting sacred places for the forgiveness of sins and for obtaining the blessing of the gods is very common among the Indian people. Such pilgrimages are followed by a long period of prayer, fasting and abstinence. From very ancient times the St Thomas Christians also used to make pilgrimages to the tomb of St Thomas in Mylapore and to other holy places after due preparation, fast and prayer, imitating the practices of their Hindu brethren. According to tradition every man was accustomed to make a pilgrimage to Mylapore in the present federal state of Tamil Nadu at least once during his life. To give alms for such pilgrimage to those who had no means was a glorious custom among the St Thomas Christians. This custom of pilgrimage to Mylapore almost stopped by the year 1838.[82]

17. Home Liturgy

For the Hindus, religion is home-centred. Most of the religious practices and rituals are conducted at home under the leadership of the head of the family.[83] Emulating the examples of their Hindu brethren, the St Thomas Christians also developed many domestic rites in connection with birth, the beginning of education (*vidyarambham*), marriage, death, funeral and memories

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81 A. R. Sreedhara Menon, *The Cultural Heritage of Kerala: An Introduction*, Cochin 1978, 77.

82 Cf. Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal* (*St Thomas Christians*), 2nd edition, Kottayam 1992, 168-169.

83 S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life*, 177.

for the dead. Every house had a shrine or sanctuary or room for prayer. In Hindu families every day *nama japam* (praying the name of their god, such as *Rama, Rama*) was recited at the evening before the lit lamp. Just as the Hindus, in St Thomas Christian families also lamps were lit and prayers were recited especially in the evenings.[84]

18. Indigenous Church Administration

The administrative system of St Thomas Christians mainly consisted of the institutes of archdeaconate and church-assembly (*palliyogam*). Although archdeaconate existed in other Churches, in the particular ecclesial situation in India the archdeacon of all India emerged as the royally privileged religious and civil head of the St Thomas Christians with ample powers and prerogatives in the manner of a local king. Hence he was called the *Jathikkukarthavian*, namely the one responsible for the entire Christian community. In fact the Christian community, governed by the archdeacon, together with the *yogam* functioned in such an autonomous and self-sufficient manner that it could be called a "Christian republic".[85]

The institute of *palliyogam* is an eloquent example of inculturation. In fact, the *yogam* of the Malabar Church had its origin in the system of *manram* of the Indo-Dravidians, a kind of autonomous village, the heads of the families being the members of the administrative body.[86] Emulating the system of *manram*, the St Thomas Christians developed the parish *yogam*, regional *yogam* and general *yogam*, which streamlined the administration of the

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[84] For such religious traditions in the family, see J. Chalassery, "The Spiritual Life of the St. Thomas Christians (Marthomakristyanikal)", in P. Pallath (ed.), *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994, 289-293.

[85] Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 137; Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, 143.

[86] A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 24 and 41; X. Koodapuzha, "Ecclesial Identity of the St. Thomas Christians", in X. Koodapuzha (ed.), *Oriental Churches: Theological Dimensions*, Kottayam 1988, 73-74; *Christianity in India*, Kottayam 1998, 71; cf. also A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India, Volume 1: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, Bangalore 1989, 147 & 161.

Indian Church at different levels. The Carmelite missionary Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, who resided in Malabar from 14 November 1776 to 10 March 1789 reported that even at that time the Hindu and Christian *yogams* had the same procedures and the same manner of decision-making in parish *yogams*. He affirmed:

> All matters of religion are decided by the Brahmins alone, presided over by the *Sarvavèda* or their pontiff. The assembly or the community that decides is called *Yogam*. All give their votes, and this custom passed to the ecclesial communities of the St Thomas Christians, which are presided over by the bishop or the missionary or the eldest among the priests called *muppen*. The Brahmins in their assemblies hold the same order. What has been decided in the *Yogam*, is considered inviolable and an almost infallible sentence. Those who are recalcitrant are excluded from the community and cease to be members of the *Yogam*.[87]

As Paulino also indicated, all the parishioners and priests were bound to comply with the decisions of the parish assembly in matters within its competence.

During the period of Latin governance (1599-1896) of the Church of the St Thomas Christians, the regional and general *yogams* became extinct, because they were absolutely incompatible with the medieval concept of monarchic episcopal power prevalent in the West, which did not permit any participation of the Christian faithful in the administration of the Church. The parish *yogam*, modified in accordance with the power of episcopal governance and updated according to the spirit of the Eastern Code, still exists today, but with very limited powers.[88]

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[87] Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 256.

[88] On 16 January 1998 the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church approved the norms to regulate matters relating to the parish *yogam*, which the major archbishop promulgated on the same date. See *Synodal News*, no. 11 (March 1998) 44-74. Later these norms were updated and inserted in the particular code with the title: *Palliyogam*-Procedure Rules. *Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia), Kochi 2013, 108-133.

19. Indian Dress and Ornaments of the Christian Faithful

Before the sixteenth century, in dress and ornaments the St Thomas Christians were hardly distinguishable from their high caste Hindu neighbours. Like Brahmins they had a tuft of hair (*kudumi*), to which they added a cross on the top and in some places they attached the cross to "the sacred thread" (*punul*), which they wore like the Brahmins. Like the high caste Hindus, they used to bore their ears and wear ear lobes (*kadukkan*). The women wore white jacket (*chatta*) and a white cloth seven yard long and one a quarter yard breadth with a fan like appendage behind (their Brahmin counterpart had this fan like fringes in front). The ornaments like bracelets (*vala*), anklets (*thala*) girdle (*aranjanam*) were the same for both Christians and Brahmins. Besides the Christian women had a pair of golden ear ornaments worn on the upper part of each ear, a substitute for the *valis* of the Brahmin ladies. Like the *Nambudhiri* women they also used a palm-leaf umbrella (*olakuda*).[89] Against the Indian dress and ornaments the Synod of Diamper decreed:

> Whereas the distinction of the faithful from unbelievers, even by outward signs and habits, it is a thing which has always been endeavoured, that so the one may be known and divided from the other; therefore the Synod having observed that there is no distinction either in their habits or in their hair, or in anything else, between the Christians of this diocese and the heathen *Nairs*, does command, that henceforward no Christian do presume to bore their ears, or to do anything to make them large, except women, among whom it is a universal ornament: and whosoever shall transgress herein, shall be punished at the pleasure of the prelate, who shall not suffer them to wear an ornament of gold or of anything else in their

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[89] Cf, Synod of Diamper, session IX, decree 17; Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, 151-152; A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 61; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes*, 251; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 81-82;"Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 90-91; S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life*, 165: A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 29-30; J. Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 51-52.

> ears; and whosoever shall presume to wear any such ornament, shall be thrown out of the church, neither shall the *casture* be given them until such time as they are brought to yield effectual obedience, and to leave off such ornaments [...].[90]

In accordance with the directives of the Synod the St Thomas Christians made some modifications in their dress-code, but did not adopt the Western style. Evidently they had to follow the evolution in South India with regard to the dress throughout the centuries.

20. Vegetarian Food

Just like their high caste Hindu brethren, the food of the St Thomas Christians was normally vegetarian. They rarely ate meat and always shunned beef. Alcoholic drinks were considered unbecoming to their social status. During feasts they ate with their fingers squatting on long mattresses, their plates being plantain leaves folded into two which signified their privilege to use two leaves in imitation of the Brahmins.[91] As we have stated above, on fasting days they did not use even fish, egg and milk products, but only pure vegetarian meals. After the arrival of the Portuguese and the construction of a fortress in Cranganore, the St Thomas Christians left that town and settled in other places, because they were "forced to begin the fast of Lent on Ash Wednesday and to eat fish, whereas they do not eat fish in times of the fast".[92] Gradually the residence of the Metropolitan was also transferred from Cranganore to Angamaly for fear of the Portuguese. "The Christian community lost most of its former honour and prestige among (high) caste Hindus, and it became difficult to have contact

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[90] Session IX, decree 17; at that time Archbishop Menezes could not have imagined what would happen in the West in the twentieth century as regards dress and ornaments.

[91] P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 82; "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 91.

[92] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 325; cf. A.M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 178.

with them, as the custom of eating beef was slowly introduced among the Christians".[93]

21. Caste as an Extreme Level of Cultural Adaptation

The ancestors of the St Thomas Christians who had embraced Christian faith from different religions and races formed a single community and all of them enjoyed the same dignity, privileges and rights. When the South Indian society was restructured according to caste system, after the tenth century the indigenous Christian community also became inadvertently part of the spontaneous evolution and began to be considered by other groups as one of the high castes with special privileges and incomparable prerogatives. This was a consequence of the compartmentalization of the South Indian society and an extreme level of cultural adaption and natural contextualization for self-existence and survival. Soon people began to regard the Christian community also as a *jathi* and its royally privileged national head, the archdeacon of all India as *Jathikkukarthavian*.

According to Gouvea St Thomas Christians practised the rules of pollution and touch, not because they accepted it as an ideology, but only for practical purposes, namely to preserve their privileges and to maintain contact with the high caste Hindus and kings, necessary for trade and commerce.[94] He states:

> They used to observe the custom of other Malabars of not touching the low castes, and if they happen to touch them they wash themselves, not because of the superstition of the gentiles, who believe that, if they touch the low castes, they get polluted, as they say, which is the same as irregular, until they wash themselves; but because they live among Nairs, if they touch the low castes, Nairs will not be able to touch them, and thus they will lose the contact, the communication of life, the purchases and sales and the honours

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[93] A. Cherukarakunnel, "The Hindu Christians of India", in J. Vellian (ed.), *The Malabar Church* (*OCA* 186), Rome 1970, 208.

[94] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 63 & 74; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes*, 258 & 282-283.

> of the kings, because with the Christians the Nairs can communicate and deal, because both are of noble castes, and for the same reason with the Brahmins.[95]

Archbishop Menezes and the Western missionaries who abolished even innocent Indianized Christian practices and who are often praised for the eradication of social evils in the Synod of Diamper, contrary to what many believe, did not abolish the caste system among the Christians, which was really the root cause of all other social evils. The Synod of Diamper interpreted caste practices as something in which the faith is in no ways concerned:

> [...] yet forasmuch as the Christians thereof, by reason of their being subject to infidel princes, whom they are forced to obey in all things, wherein the faith is no ways concerned; and that Christians, if they should but touch those of the baser rank, could not after that, according to the laws, have any trade or communication with the better sort of people, and so would not be able to live among them; for which reason, the Synod does declare that the custom of not touching any of the baser sort, being observed only in compliance with the heathens, and looked upon as a superstitious heathen vanity, and not voluntarily observed, is no superstition, nor for the above-mentioned reasons any matter of scruple, and that the Christians may in all places thus lawfully observe it, where there are Nairs or any of the better sort, or where it is likely they may be, or may come to hear of it [...]. [96]

Obviously the caste practices were (and are) against the gospel principles of universal fraternity, freedom of the children of God and equal dignity of all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God. In spite of this, Archbishop Menezes, who subjugated the St Thomas Christians with the help of local kings and princes and who had to safeguard the military and commercial interest of Portugal, could not make any legislation that would have displeased the said authorities and jeopardised the spice-trade conducted by the Christians among the high castes for the economic and financial advantage of Portugal.

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[95] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 63; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes*, 258.

[96] Synod of Diamper, session IX, decree 2.

Conclusion

Often it is said that cultural adaptation among the St Thomas Christians was limited to superfluous socio-cultural customs. However, an accurate examination reveals that inculturation among the St Thomas Christians was very profound and unique, touching even very essential elements of Christian sacraments, such as Eucharistic bread, wine, and holy oils, which constitute the matter of the respective sacraments according to the Scholastic theological categories. The St Thomas Christians were fully convinced of the fact that their forefathers had received their prayers and rites from Apostle Thomas in Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic) and hence preserved the established rites of East Syrian tradition as part of the way of Thomas. Hence, before the sixteenth century they administered the sacraments of Christian initiation and holy Orders according to the East Syrian tradition with intelligent Indian adaptations, but for the sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance), Marriage and Extreme Unction they developed even "Indian rites" consonant with their basic liturgical tradition. Almost all the sacramentals were either of Indian origin or were thoroughly adapted to the Indian situation.

With regard to the socio-cultural life, adaptation and contextualization were complete, because those people in South India who had accepted Christ due to the evangelizing ministry of Apostle Thomas had only changed their faith, but maintained the very same customs, traditions and *modus vivendi* of the indigenous population, adapting only those elements of Indian culture which were not compatible with the Christian faith. In fact, the St Thomas Christians could not be distinguished from their Hindu brethren except in those aspects which were specifically Christian.

We have also seen how the Western missionaries and especially the Synod of Diamper in 1599 eradicated the Indian cultural elements from the liturgical and socio-cultural life of the St Thomas Christians stigmatizing them as pagan practices or as expressions of heresy and schism, and transformed the Indian Eastern Church as a Western form of Christianity. Learning lessons from the past and emulating the way of Thomas as practised by the pre-Portuguese and pre-westernized Indian Church, further efforts

may be made to regain the indo-oriental identity of the Syro-Malabar Church according to the directives of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent official teaching, in harmony with the *contemporary* Indian culture and striving to keep with the *Zeitgeist*.

Another lesson that could be learnt from the manner of the pre-sixteenth century cultural adaptation is that when the Syro-Malabar Church takes up the ecclesial task of evangelization in other parts of India, there may not be any exportation or imposition of Kerala culture, with due regard for the spiritual heritage and religious values, which are beyond localisms and chronological conditioning. Those who embrace Christ and his message should be encouraged to continue their own socio-cultural life as before, insofar as it is compatible with the Gospel values of universal brotherhood, equality of all the children of God and equal dignity of all human beings.

Article Two

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS IN INDIA AND THE SYNOD OF DIAMPER

Introduction

The Western missionaries, who reached South India from the beginning of the sixteenth century, made concerted efforts to convert the St Thomas Christians to the Latin Church and to the Roman liturgical tradition. The Synod of Diamper, convoked by Alexis de Menezes, the Latin Archbishop of Goa (1595-1610) from 20 to 26 June 1599 was the culmination of such missionary endeavours. The Synod introduced several modifications in the eucharistic liturgy and in the sacramental rites of the St Thomas Christians. Since scholarly studies are not lacking on the Romanization of the eucharistic liturgy, in this article we deal only with the other six sacraments.[1] After some considerations on the general position of the Western missionaries concerning the sacraments, we proceed to a succinct articulation of the manner of their administration before the sixteenth century, the judgment of the missionaries on each sacrament and the enactments of the Synod on the sacramental liturgy. At the end we briefly consider the implementation of the synodal decrees and the shape of the sacramental liturgy of the St Thomas Christians during the Western governance. In order to avoid confusion, in this article we maintain the terminology of that epoch.

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[1] See especially R. H. Connolly "The Work of Meneses on the Malabar Liturgy", *Journal of Theological Studies* XV (1914) 396-425, 569-589; P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper* (already cited above).

1. The General Opinion of the Western Missionaries: All the Sacraments of the St Thomas Christians either Invalid or Inexistent

With the emergence of scholasticism, from the twelfth century onwards the Aristotelian philosophy was officially adopted in the West to explain theological truths and the sacramental mystery. The Aristotelian hylomorphic theory was in fact applied to the seven sacraments, clearly distinguishing their matter and form and precisely determining the exact moment of their actualization. The matter is the material element used for each sacrament, while the form consists of a prayer, the pronunciation of which determines the matter. Each sacrament comes into being, when the respective matter and form are joined together by the proper minister with the intention of doing what the Church does.[2] After enumerating the seven sacraments "of the new law", the Council of Florence (1431-1445) declared:

> All these sacraments are made up of three elements: namely, things as the matter, words as the form, and the person of the minister who confers the sacrament with the intention of doing what the Church does. If any of these is lacking, the sacrament is not effected.[3]

According to the strict scholastic tradition the form of words must be pronounced audibly, so that they are externalized. A purely interior recitation of the form would be insufficient.[4] Obviously any defect in the matter or variation in the exact form renders a sacrament invalid or inexistent.

After the emergence of scholastic system, the Western sacramental theology was limited to precisely determining the divine institution, the matter, the form, the minister and the recipient of each sacrament. The role and action of the Holy Spirit,

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[2] Cf. *The Christian Faith,* nos. 1303, 1307, 1321 & 1325; *Enchiridion symbolorum,* nos. 1262, 1312, 1611 & 2328.

[3] Council of Florence, The bull of union with the Armenians, 22 November 1439, *The Christian Faith*, no. 1307; N. P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* vol. I, London 1990, 542; *Enchiridion symbolorum*, no. 1312.

[4] P. Haffner, *The Sacramental Mystery*, Oxford 1999, 15.

the real "minister" of all the sacraments, were obfuscated in the West by the application of Aristotelian philosophical categories. The sacraments come into being, *ex opere operato*, namely from the work worked, at the moment when the minister pronounces the specific form of these sacraments over the proper matter with the intention of doing what the Church does. The intrinsic efficacy of the sacrament does not depend on the worthiness of the minister.[5]

Even after the emergence of scholasticism in the West, the Eastern Churches continued to consider the sacraments as divine mysteries, accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit. In the East, for each sacrament invocation of the Holy Spirit and some kind of epiclesis can be found. Naturally the St Thomas Christians who followed the East Syrian tradition did not have any knowledge of scholastic theological system until the arrival of the Western missionaries in the beginning of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the Semitic, scriptural, symbolic, mystical and 'spiritual' theology of the East Syrian tradition was unknown to the Western missionaries, who scrutinized all the sacraments according to the Aristotelian categories and declared all of them invalid, defective or inexistent. We present in a schematic form the position of the Western missionaries with regard to the sacraments of the St Thomas Christians, which we will explain later with sufficient documentation.

Baptism	Invalid, because of the defect of East Syrian passive forms, which did not correspond to the true and authentic "Catholic formula".
Confirmation	Completely inexistent, not found in any of the liturgical books in Malabar.
Penance	Inexistent, only some kind of invalid general confession.
Extreme Unction	Inexistent, only some prayers, without the proper matter and form.

[5] Cf. P. Haffner, *The Sacramental Mystery*, 12-20.

Holy Orders	Invalid, because of the absence of right matter, namely the handing over of the chalice with wine and the paten with bread for the Order of priesthood; book of the gospels for diaconate; an empty chalice and paten for minor Orders.
Matrimony	Defective, because of many pagan practices and the absence of exact form in many cases.

Since the Western missionaries considered the sacraments of the St Thomas Christians invalid, defective or inexistent, from the time of their arrival they began to force the three last Chaldean metropolitans: Mar Jacob (1503-1550), Mar Joseph Sulaqa (1555-1569) and Mar Abraham (1557-1597) to modify the liturgy and discipline of the sacraments in accordance with the Roman tradition or to translate Latin liturgical books into Syriac for the correct and valid administration of sacraments.[6]

The original project of the Western missionaries was to introduce the Latin rite among the St Thomas Christians in Latin language itself, but soon they realized that it was impossible to implement this immediately because of the great attachment of these Christians to Syriac language and Syriac liturgy. In fact, the St Thomas Christians considered Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, as a sacred language, since it was spoken by Our Lord and his disciples. They were firmly convinced of the fact that St Thomas had celebrated the Lord's Supper in India and bequeathed to them other rites and prayers in Syriac. According to them the Syriac liturgy and prayers came directly from the Apostle Thomas and not from the Babylonian or Assyrian Church. Hence, they considered it sacrosanct and inviolable, as part of the law or way of Thomas.[7]

Having realized the impossibility to replace Syriac with Latin the missionaries adopted a temporary via media solution, namely the translation of Latin liturgical books into Syriac language for the

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[6] Cf. P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 2005, 35-53; J. Kollaparambil, "The Impact of the Synod of Diamper on the Ecclesial Identity of the St Thomas Christians", 155-158; G. Thadikkatt, *Liturgical Identity of the Mār Tōma Nazrāni Church*, Kottayam 2004, 82-89.

[7] Cf. Article Seven, no. 4.

use of the St Thomas Christians, as long as Latin could not be used. Although some translations were made from the time of Metropolitan Mar Jacob (1503-1550), this idea obtained formal canonical approval only in the third provincial Council of Goa, held in June 1585. The Council ordered that the Roman Ritual, the Roman Missal, the Roman Breviary, and the Roman Pontifical were to be translated into Chaldean (Syriac) for the use of the St Thomas Christians:

> Moreover, for the same conformity, it has seemed to this council that, since for the time being Latin cannot be utilized, the Roman Missal and the Roman Breviary, reformed in accordance with the order of the Council of Trent, should be translated into Chaldean (Syriac); and that from the Roman Pontifical and the Roman Sacerdotal (Ritual) are to be translated those parts necessary for conferring or giving (holy) Orders, and for administering the sacraments; and from the other books of the (Latin) Church, what is necessary for that Church [...].[8]

The decree demonstrates the firm intention of the missionaries and the then Indian Latin hierarchy as a whole to substitute the Oriental rite of the St Thomas Christians with the Latin rite. The translation of liturgical books was ordered only because of the evident difficulty to use them for liturgical celebrations in Latin language itself, because of the excessive attachment of the Indian Eastern Christians to Syriac language, considered sacred.

2. The Judgment of the Missionaries on Each Sacrament and the Drastic Changes Effected by the Synod of Diamper

The Synod of Diamper, convoked from 20 to 26 June 1599 by Aleixo de Menezes, metropolitan archbishop of Goa (1595-1610),

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[8] "Outrosim para a mesma conformidade pareceo ao Concilio que por agora se tresladasse em caldeo, para em quanto o latim não servisse, o missal, e breviario romano reformados por ordem do Concilio Tridentino, e que do pontifical, e sacerdotal romano se tresladasse o necessario para conferir, ou dar ordens, e administrar sacramentos, e dos mais livros da Igreja o que para ella fosse necessario [...]". Session 3, decree 7, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum*, Appendix 1, 75; original with English translation in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 115-116.

for reforming the Indian Eastern Church amply treated the doctrinal, liturgical and disciplinary aspects of the seven sacraments, determining the matter, form and the minister of each sacrament according to the scholastic theology. In the profession of faith conducted on the second day of the Synod, after enumerating the seven sacraments, the St Thomas Christians were obliged to accept all the customs, rites and ceremonies of the Roman Church for their proper celebration. In fact, they confessed:

> I most firmly accept and embrace the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and all other observances and constitutions of the same (Roman) Church. I also profess that there are seven true and proper sacraments of the New Law, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ and necessary for the salvation of the human race, though all are not necessary for each individual person: they are baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order and matrimony; and that they confer grace; and that of these, baptism, confirmation and order cannot be repeated without sacrilege. I also admit and accept all the customs, the rites and ceremonies received and approved in the Roman Church for the solemn administration of all the sacraments mentioned above.[9]

The Synod of Diamper confirmed the position of the missionaries with regard to the status of the sacraments in Malabar and explained them, applying Western philosophical and theological categories. In accordance with the scholastic theology, the Synod declared that all the seven sacraments are:

> [...] perfected by three causes: things as their matter, words as their form and the person who is to administer with an intention of doing what the Church does; where any of these three causes are wanting, they are not perfect, neither indeed is any sacrament administered.[10]

The intention of the Synod of Diamper was to completely substitute the Eastern rite with the Latin rite. Hence, ratifying the decree of the third provincial Council of Goa, while legislating on the sacraments, the Synod also ordered their correct administration

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[9] Synod of Diamper, session II, decree 1.

[10] Synod of Diamper, session IV, *The Seven Sacraments*, preliminary decree.

according to the Syriac translation of the Roman liturgical books. Successively with a general decree the priests were obliged:

> to use the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Roman Ceremonial, which the said Metropolitan has commanded to be translated into Syriac and to be kept in all churches, which contains the forms of baptizing, of anointing the sick, of marrying, of sacramental absolution, with the customary prayers therein; of administering the holy sacrament of the altar, of exorcisms of the church, for people possessed with the devil, the blessings of holy water, of ashes, of chains and branches, as also the form of burying the dead, old and young, and of reconciling churches and churchyards [...].[11]

The Synod of Diamper officially confirmed and ratified all the regulations, innovations and modifications already effected by the Western missionaries since the beginning of the sixteenth century. In fact, many decrees refer to disciplinary and liturgical practices, which were already in vogue even many years before the Synod, which aimed at the complete conformity of the liturgy and sacramental discipline of the Church of St Thomas Christians to those of the Roman-Portuguese tradition. Now we briefly examine the position of the Western missionaries and the decisions of the Synod of Diamper with regard to each sacrament.

2. 1. Baptism

Alvaro Penteado, a zealous Portuguese missionary (in India from 1512 to 1532), who wanted the St Thomas Christians to follow the Latin rite, considered the baptism administered by Chaldean Metropolitan Mar Jacob, bishop of the St Thomas Christians from 1503 to 1550, defective because of the inappropriate form. Penteado and the priests grouped around him wanted to re-baptize the St Thomas Christians according to the Latin rite, but the said Christians were opposed to such a move. Induced by the missionaries, in a letter King John III of Portugal asked Mar Jacob to allow Penteado and other Portuguese priests to

[11] Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 22.

baptize his Christians.[12] Defending the validity of the East Syrian baptism, Mar Jacob, designated the "Bishop of India", wrote to King John III in 1524 as follows:

> As for Alvaro Penteado's baptizing the Christians of the country, if you do this, because you think that I baptize in a manner different from that, which Jesus Christ gave in the Gospel, and so informed you, then may you be informed by Father Master Joam Caro, how you have been deceived in this. Do not think that I am so silly and know so little of the law, that I do not know the Holy Scripture Old and New as far as concern this matter of baptizing, though it be true that I am not instructed in the usages of the Pope and in the Roman usage. And if you in spite of that should order me, to allow the said Alvaro Penteado to baptize with the other fathers, I shall let them do so. But it seems to me, you shall lose the friendship of these Christians, for they esteem me very much and do not want anybody else to baptize them as long as I am alive.[13]

Antonio De Gouvea, who exaggerated everything to stigmatize the St Thomas Christians as the worst heretics and schismatics, reported about the re-baptism ordered by Archbishop Menezes, since he judged that those Christians were not validly baptized:

> [...] of baptism they had so much confusion in the form, that almost each *Cassanar* (priest) baptized in the way he thought best, and even inside the same Bishopric, in different places there were different forms, as desired by the *Cassanars* (priests), many of whom as they were idiots and ignorant, did not administer the sacrament. As the Archbishop found out that the entire senior people of the Bishopric baptized, he secretly ordered them again to be baptized, giving the baptism to each one in his home in

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[12] Cf. E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Bombay 1957, 175; A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India, Volume 1*, 290-302 & 304-309; G. Battaglia, *Cristiani indiani: i Cristiani di San Tommaso nel confronto di civiltà del XVI secolo*, Roma 2007, 85-88.

[13] The Portuguese original and English translation, in G. Schurhammer, *The Malabar Church and Rome during the Early Portuguese Period and before*, Trichinopoly 1934, 15-16; Father Master Joam Caro, referred to in this citation, was a Dominican Portuguese priest, who knew Mar Jacob well and who was opposed to the drastic measures of Penteado.

> particular, for it seemed that it was a scandal in the Christian community, many of the Christians were not baptized [...].[14]

As Gouvea indicates, Archbishop Menezes also considered the Syro-Oriental formula of baptism null and hence he ordered the re-baptism of many Christians during his visits before and after the Synod of Diamper.[15] It was really a scandalous act to re-baptize even the senior people who led a heroic Christian life according to the law of Thomas for several years. Hence such re-baptisms were not conducted publicly, but privately in their homes.

Evidently the Synod of Diamper considered invalid the Eastern form of Baptism. After a preliminary statement, entitled "The Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism", decrees 1-20 of the fourth session of the Synod are dedicated to different liturgical and canonical aspects of the said sacrament. According to the doctrinal definition of the Synod, we give the matter, form and minister of the sacrament in a schematic way.

Session IV	The Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism.
Matter	True, natural and common water, as of the sea, rivers, fountains, lakes or rain and no other, though never so pure and clean; all others being liquors, and not natural water.
Form	Latin form: I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Minister	Parish priest, but in case of necessity, any priest or a deacon, a layman or woman, even an infidel, Muslim, heretic, Jew or any other person.

Notwithstanding the constant efforts of the missionaries, at the epoch of the Synod of Diamper the Syro-Oriental form continued to be used in many places, which obviously the Synod

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[14] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes,* 58; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 237-238.

[15] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes,* 75; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 302-303.

considered null and void. According to the judgment of the Synod two baptismal forms were in use at that time:

> N. is baptized and perfected, in the name of the Father, amen; in the name of the Son, amen; in the name of the Holy Spirit, amen. May this servant of Christ be baptized in the name of the Father, Amen; in the name of the Son, Amen and in the name of the Holy Spirit, Amen.[16]

The first form is really the East Syrian formula of "confirmation" which the Synod misunderstood as a variant of the *forma sacramenti* of baptism, while the second corresponds to the authentic East Syrian baptismal formula. In any case the Synod prohibited the use of the baptismal formulas of the East Syrian tradition under threat of automatic excommunication and prescribed the *forma sacramenti* of the Latin Church in the following words:

> [...] the Synod in virtue of obedience, and upon pain of excommunication to be *ipso facto* incurred, does command, that no person shall presume to use either these, or any other forms, but that which is used in the holy Roman Church, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit', and that all other forms be blotted out of their baptisteries and books, and this be put in their place.[17]

The Synod commanded all vicars and curates in virtue of holy obedience to celebrate the sacrament of baptism "with the rites and ceremonies, exorcisms and prayers, that are contained in the Roman ceremonial, which the most illustrious metropolitan has ordered to be translated into Syriac for the administration of all the sacraments, and is to be kept in all churches [...]".[18] All the St Thomas Christians were obliged to declare to Archbishop Menezes or to his representative, during the visitation of the parishes after the conclusion of the Synod, the time and the form according to which they were baptized, so that the validity of their baptism might be ascertained. The Synod decreed:

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16 Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 1.

17 Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 1.

18 Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 14.

> The Synod being informed, that at diverse times they have used different forms of baptism in this diocese, which were introduced by schismatic and ignorant prelates, some of which were not legitimate, neither was the sacrament administered by them, as was declared by the most illustrious Metropolitan, and others after a strict examination; and others were very doubtful, does therefore, in the name of the Holy Ghost, desire and command all the Christian faithful of this diocese to declare to the said Metropolitan, at the visitation he intends to make of the churches of this diocese, or to persons deputed by him, the time when they were baptized, that so according to the form that was then used, a saving remedy may be provided, in conformity to what shall be ordained therein and all shall submit themselves to whatsoever he shall be pleased to order.[19]

In fact, as he did before the Synod, also during his visits after its conclusion, wherever the Archbishop found a baptismal formula different from that of the Latin Church he declared the baptism of those Christians invalid and ordered the priests to re-baptize them secretly in their homes, in order to avoid scandal among the people. For example, Gouvea provides the pattern of the visit of Menezes after the conclusion of the Synod, describing his visit in the parish church of Diamper. As regards the form of baptism it is stated:

> In the books of this church was found a corrupt form of baptism, so that undoubtedly it was of no value, and in it until then had baptized all the *Cassanars* (priests) of the place, and the eldest of them confessed that for fifty years he was baptizing that way, with which an order was given that all those people should be baptized secretly in their homes, so that there might not be a scandal among the Christians, and thus many *Cassanars* (priests) were remembering having lived in other parts, that they had been baptized there, and it was done that way.[20]

In fact the exclusive adherence of Archbishop Menezes and Western missionaries to the scholastic theology and the total ignorance of Eastern theology and liturgy led them to commit the

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[19] Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 2.

[20] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes,* 75; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes,* 302-303.

really scandalous act of re-baptizing several practising Catholics, without any regard for their age or status.

According to the common tradition of the Eastern Churches Baptism is administered through the rite of triple immersion.[21] In the East Syrian tradition also the act of Baptism consists of a triple immersion, while pronouncing the Trinitarian baptismal formula in the passive form.[22] The same was the general practice among the St Thomas Christians. While speaking about the married clergy, Francis Ros affirmed that the "wives of the clerics used to assist at the baptism of women, stripping them and then dressing them in their manner; for they used to baptise men and women nude by immersion into water".[23] The acts and decrees of the Synod of Diamper are silent about the manner of Baptism. However, Francis Ros decreed that in urgent cases like sickness "the priests should go to the house of the child and reciting the essential formula, should baptize it pouring water on the head".[24]

According to the scholastic theology the holy oil, which is used for the baptismal anointing is not part of the matter of the sacrament, although it is a fundamental element. As we have seen in the previous article, before the Synod of Diamper, coconut, sesame or palm oil was used for the anointing of baptism and confirmation.[25] Antonio Gouvea states:

> Neither in the baptism nor in any other sacrament were they using holy oils, nor did they know them, but because they saw that their books spoke of them, they used to anoint all the children after baptism with coconut oil or with the oil of sesame without any blessing, considering this anointing to be holy, what the mothers and the maids do in Malabar for their children to have health and to

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[21] Cf. Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Vatican City 1996, no. 48.

[22] J. Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition*, Rome 1995, 115; W. De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, 175-176.

[23] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 329.

[24] F. Ros, *Diocesan Statutes*, *Codex Borgiano Indiano* 18, f. 20.

[25] Article One, no. 7.

> recover strength. Of the sacrament of confirmation they had no knowledge at all [...].[26]

Since Gouvea, a great supporter and friend of Archbishop Menezes, never visited Kerala, he wrote on the basis of information he obtained from the said Archbishop and from other Western missionaries. Hence his statements should be evaluated with due caution and subjected to a rigorous historical-critical hermeneutics. He seems to deride the baptismal anointing with coconut or sesame oil, comparing it with "what the mothers and the maids do in Malabar for their children" during normal bath.

It seems, some missionaries affirmed that the St Thomas Christians did not use "holy oil" for any sacrament, because they were using coconut or sesame oil, instead of olive oil as in the West. However, Francis Ros confirmed the use of holy oil among them: "In the baptism they were using also the holy oil, with which they anointed the baptized on the chest before baptism and on the head after baptism".[27]

In any case the Synod of Diamper also observed: "The holy oils having hitherto not been used in this bishopric in any of the sacraments, and if any have been used, it having been without any distinction and without being blessed by the bishop [...]".[28] The Synod abolished the use of coconut oil and commanded all vicars in virtue of holy obedience to use only the "holy oils" blessed and furnished by Archbishop Menezes.[29]

Moreover, the Synod prescribed that in all parish churches there should be a box with three vessels of plate, tin or glass in which the holy oils shall be kept with decency and reverence.[30] In fact, at the closing ceremony of the Synod each parish priest was given a box with three vases of holy oils, blessed by the Archbishop. The Portuguese historian Gouvea states:

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[26] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 58; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 238.

[27] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 329.

[28] Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 14; cf. also session VIII, decree 8.

[29] Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 14; cf. also session VIII, decree 8.

[30] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 8.

> [...] to each of the vicars was given an altar stone, from those which the Archbishop for its purpose had consecrated, and also a small box with vases and holy oils with the order and regulations to be used by them, which were taught to all, and a surplice to administer with it the holy sacraments.[31]

Thus the use of holy oils as in the Latin Church, namely the sacred chrism, oil of the sick and oil of catechumens, was introduced among the St Thomas Christians.

According to the Indian custom of the St Thomas Christians, unless in danger of death, the infant was baptized only forty days after its birth, during which period some Christianized social rites were performed. The "Synod does strictly command that all children be baptized on the eighth day after they are born, according to the custom of the universal Church".[32]

As in the case of oil, before the Synod of Diamper there existed several other Indianized Christian practices, Christianized social rites and ceremonies in connection with childbirth and Baptism. Moreover Indianized Christian names were given to the infants at the moment of Baptism. Many of such christianized Indian customs and practices connected with birth, baptism and childhood were condemned as pagan practices and abolished.[33]

2.2. Confirmation

For the first twelve centuries as in the East, so also in the West Christian initiation was one unique rite, according to which baptism and confirmation were administered in a single ceremony, at the end of which Communion was also given both to infants and adults. Hence until the thirteenth century whether the candidate for initiation was an infant or an adult the rites of baptism,

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[31] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 72; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 291.

[32] Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 5.

[33] Cf. Article I, 1.

confirmation and first Communion were celebrated together in all the Christian Churches.[34]

However in the West from the thirteenth century onwards confirmation began to be administered separately with a completely independent and autonomous rite. The main cause of the change was the desire to reserve the administration of confirmation to the bishop, whose visit in each parish of the diocese occurred with an interval of several years. Gradually Holy Communion also began to be reserved to persons who reached the age of reason.[35] Regarding the unity of the sacraments of Christian initiation in the early centuries and their gradual separation in the West, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

> In the first centuries confirmation generally comprised one single celebration with baptism, forming with it a "double sacrament," according to the expression of St. Cyprian. Among other reasons, the multiplication of infant baptisms all through the year, the increase of rural parishes, and the growth of dioceses often prevented the bishop from being present at all baptismal celebrations. In the West the desire to reserve the completion of baptism to the bishop caused the temporal separation of the two sacraments. The East has kept them united, so that confirmation is conferred by the priest who baptizes. But he can do so only with the "myron" consecrated by a bishop.[36]

Even after the separation of the sacraments of Christian initiation in the West, they generally continued to be administered together in one celebration in the East, with the exception of some Eastern Catholic Churches, in which the modified Latin discipline was introduced by the Western missionaries. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches attests:

> For historical and cultural reasons, such practices were abandoned by the Western Church, and the baptismal initiation was conferred to children in various successive moments. However, the ancient

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[34] For details, P. A. Muroni, *L'ordine dei sacramenti dell'iniziazione cristiana*, Roma 2007, 29-57; Cf. M. E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, Collegeville 2007, 159-200 e 219-246.

[35] For details, see P. Pallath, *Unity of Christian Initiation*, 67-100.

[36] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London 1999, no. 1290.

> use was maintained intact and uninterruptedly in the East. This link is so strong that, in quite a number of contexts, the term 'Baptism' usually implies all three phases of Christian Initiation; this is the title attributed to them in many manuscripts or printed euchologies. This practice was changed during the last centuries in different Eastern Catholic Churches under external pressure [...].[37]

In accordance with the common tradition of the Christian East, also in the East Syrian or Chaldean tradition, the Christian initiation, designated simply as baptism, is a complex and progressive ceremony, aimed at the perfect and complete initiation of candidates, with the reception of three sacraments: baptism, chrismation (confirmation) and Holy Communion. In fact, the last part of the rite of baptism is the Western equivalent of the rite of confirmation. Evidently there is no separate rite of confirmation as in the West nor the name confirmation is found in any of the authentic liturgical books of the East Syrian tradition, because the last part of the rite of baptism itself, consisting of laying on of hands and anointing is considered the sacrament of confirmation according to the Western categories.[38]

Since the St Thomas Christians followed the East Syrian tradition, the sacrament of confirmation was administered together with Baptism in accordance with the universal practice of the Christian Orient. There did not exist any separate rite for the said sacrament, nor was the name "confirmation" found in the Syriac liturgical books. For this reason, the Western missionaries judged that the said sacrament was unknown to the St Thomas Christians.[39] Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean Metropolitan, was forced to translate the rite of the sacrament of confirmation from the Roman Pontifical into Syriac and introduce it in Malabar. Bishop Francis Ros clearly asserted:

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[37] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 42.

[38] For details, see P. Pallath, *Unity of Christian Initiation*, 16-42.

[39] Cf. F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 331; A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 58; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 238; A. Monserrat, "Informacion de los christianos de S. Thomé", 518; the Synod of Diamper, session IV, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Confirmation*, decree 1.

> About the sacrament of confirmation they did not have any custom, nor have I found any mention of the sacrament of confirmation in these Chaldean books. Mar Abraham, who was the last of the Chaldean prelate to govern this Christianity, introduced the use of this sacrament. He translated the form and prayers of this sacrament into Chaldean with the help of the Fathers of the Society who live at Vaipicotta. However, he never gave it, except to those whom he wanted to ordain.[40]

It seems that, induced by the missionaries, Mar Abraham translated the Latin form and prayers of the sacrament of confirmation into Syriac, but he followed the Chaldean tradition, administering this sacrament separately only to those whom he wanted to ordain, so that the missionaries could not question the suitability of the ordained.

Although Francis Ros denied the existence of the sacrament of confirmation, while speaking about Baptism, he explicitly stated: "In the baptism they were using also the holy oil, with which they anointed the baptised on the chest before baptism and on the head after baptism".[41] At the epoch of the Synod of Diamper, according to the East Syrian tradition the post baptismal anointing, together with the imposition of hands and the prescribed prayers, constituted what was known in the Western tradition as the sacrament of confirmation. By the rite of post-baptismal anointing, performed as a continuation of baptism, the baptised were completely immersed in the mystery of Christ and perfected by the gift of the Holy Spirit.[42] Hence, it is evident that confirmation according to the East Syrian tradition existed among the St Thomas Christians.

After a statement on the doctrine, the Synod of Diamper enacted three decrees on the sacrament of confirmation. The Synod definitively separated confirmation from baptism in harmony with

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[40] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 331.

[41] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 329.

[42] For details, J. Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition*, 116-122 & 245; P. Pallath, *Unity of Christian Initiation*, 39-49, 53-56, 62-65.

the Roman tradition and stipulated that the ordinary minister of confirmation is the bishop and not the priest.[43]

Session IV	The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
Matter	Holy oil of Chrism, made from the oil of the olive-tree and balsam, both mixed together and blessed by the bishop.
Form	I sign you with the sign of the cross and confirm you with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Minister	Bishops, successors of the Apostles.

In tune with the position of the missionaries the Synod also held that until that time there had been no use, nor information of the sacrament of confirmation in Malabar, because of the neglect of the 'heretical' prelates. Already before the Synod of Diamper, Archbishop Menezes visited many churches and administered confirmation to all, but he could not complete such visits. So he wanted to continue the visit of the churches after the conclusion of the Synod, in order to administer confirmation to the remaining faithful and to implement the decrees of the Synod. As regards the reception of confirmation the Synod ordered:

> For as much as hitherto there has been no use, nor so much as knowledge of the holy sacrament of confirmation among the Christians of this bishopric, the heretical prelates that governed it having neglected to feed the people in a great many cases with wholesome Catholic food; therefore the Synod does declare, that all persons who are come to the use of reason, ought to receive this holy sacrament, having the opportunity of receiving it at the hands of a bishop, and that all masters of families, and others having the charge of children and slaves to receive the said sacrament, and that all who out of contumacy or contempt shall refuse to receive it, or to order such as belong to them to go to it, are guilty of a mortal sin, and if they neglect it out of conceit of its not being a sacrament, they are heretics and aliens from the true Catholic faith; wherefore the Synod does command, that in the visitation that is to be made

[43] Synod of Diamper, session IV, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Confirmation* (before decrees).

> speedily by the most illustrious Metropolitan in the churches of this bishopric, all men and women that are seven years old do come to be christened or confirmed, those only excepted who were confirmed by the said lord in his former visitation, or at some other, or on some other occasion, by some other bishop [...].[44]

According to the decree practically all St Thomas Christians, who completed seven years of age and who did not receive confirmation during the previous visit of Menezes, had to receive the sacrament in the Latin rite after the conclusion of the Synod.

However, the same decree also explicitly stated that "this sacrament as well as that of baptism being never to be repeated, insomuch, that all who receive it a second time wittingly, are guilty of a great piece of sacrilege, besides, that they receive no sacrament thereby".[45] Paradoxically, although in good faith, the Archbishop himself perpetrated a sacrilegious act and induced the Christians to commit a sacrilege, by administering confirmation to those who had already received the said sacrament according to the Syro-Oriental tradition.

In conformity with the aforesaid decree the choice of the Christian faithful was between mortal sin or excommunication and sacrilege. Hence, many of them chose sacrilege by receiving confirmation again according to the Latin rite. The reception or rejection of this sacrament was considered the test of obedience or disobedience to the said metropolitan and even an excommunication was promulgated against those who opposed the administration of this sacrament or said anything against it or the holy ceremonies and rites of its administration.[46]

The aforementioned decrees also demonstrate that there was some kind of consternation and resistance among the St Thomas Christians, when all of them were ordered to receive the sacrament of confirmation, because they were practising Catholics, who had already received the sacraments of initiation according to the East Syrian tradition. However, by threat of punishment and excommunication Menezes constrained them to receive the

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[44] Synod of Diamper, session IV, *Confirmation,* decree 1.

[45] Synod of Diamper, session IV, *Confirmation,* decree 1.

[46] Synod of Diamper, session IV, *Confirmation,* decree 2.

sacrament of confirmation in the Latin rite. As regards the administration of confirmation during the post-synodal parish visits of Menezes the Portuguese historian Antonio De Gouvea explicitly affirms:

> And declaring the doctrine of confirmation and the excellence of this Sacrament, of which they had no knowledge, and of which they used to get scandalized in the beginning, uttering many blasphemies against it, he used to confirm all those who were in the church, first the men and then the women, which he always did standing, for many hours which he spent for this [...].[47]

During his stay in Malabar and his parish visits before and after the Synod of Diamper Archbishop Menezes administered the sacrament of confirmation to almost all the St Thomas Christians. While describing the activities of Archbishop Menezes in Malabar, the first Latin bishop of the St Thomas Christians, Francis Ros confirmed that "he gave the sacrament of confirmation to the greater part of this Christianity".[48] In brief, confirmation was administered to most of the St Thomas Christians at a second time according to the Latin rite.

With the Synod of Diamper the three sacraments of Christian initiation, baptism, confirmation and Eucharist were also completely separated according to the Latin discipline in the XVI century, thus jeopardising the intrinsic and profound unity existing between them. The confirmation became a completely independent and autonomous sacrament administered separately with the rites and ceremonies adopted from the Roman Pontifical.[49]

After the Synod of Diamper in the course of time there happened also the reversal of the original order of the administration of the sacraments of Christian initiation, conferring the Holy Communion to children before receiving the confirmation: the baptism began to be administered not later than the eighth day after the birth of a child by a priest, the Holy Communion at the age of reason and the confirmation at the early

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[47] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 74; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 297.

[48] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 343.

[49] P. Pallath, *Unity of Christian Initiation*, 122-124.

adolescence, awaiting the passage of a bishop in the parish. So the order of the administration of sacraments turned out to be: baptism, confession, Holy Communion and confirmation.[50]

2.3. Penance

There existed different modes and systems of penance in the Early Church. After a long process of gradual evolution, in the Middle Ages the individual confession to a priest emerged as the only means of penance in the Latin Church. Since the Protestant Reformers denied the necessity of external confession to a priest, the Council of Trent forcefully affirmed it, promulgating even an excommunication against those who deny its necessity.[51] In fact, the sacrament of penance began to be considered as a highly juridical and judicial act, the penitent a kind of criminal and the priest as a judge, who had to pronounce his sentence on the penitent as in a trial (process), determining adequate satisfaction. The Council of Trent even decreed an anathema against anyone who "says that sacramental absolution by a priest is not a judicial act".[52]

The East Syrian tradition, on the other hand, prefers to use a medical imagery for the sacrament of Penance. Sin is seen more as a "sickness" that requires a merciful healing than as a crime to be justly punished or expiated. Repentance, forgiveness of sins and different penitential means are considered to be the spiritual medicine that can effect this healing. The priest is understood as a physician and intercessor, who acts officially in the Church in the name of Christ, the heavenly Physician.[53]

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[50] Cf. P. Pallath, *Unity of Christian Initiation*, 124.

[51] Cf. Council of Trent, session 14, 25 November 1551, chapter 5 and canons 7-8, in N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, London 1990, 705-706 & 712; *The Christian Faith*, nos. 1625 & 1646; *Enchiridion symbolorum*, nos. 1679 & 1706.

[52] Cf. Council of Trent, session 14, 25 November 1551, canon 9, in N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, 712; *The Christian Faith*, no. 1649; *Enchiridion symbolorum*, no. 1709.

[53] Cf. D. Vechoor, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Learning from the East and the West*, Kottayam 2014, 56-77; R. Murray, *The Symbols of Church and*

In tune with the common tradition of the Church in the first millennium the celebration of the sacrament of Penance was predominantly communitarian in the Church of the East, although private confession to a priest was not completely absent.[54] During the governance of Patriarch Isoyahb III (650-660) the *Hussaya* prayer for communitarian service was composed in a more refined style, which became later the *Thaksa d'Hoosaya* (the Order or Rite of absolution).[55] The ancient rite of *Hoosaya* consisted of introductory rites as in the *Qurbana*, several profound penitential prayers and hymns, as well as absolution.[56] After the XIV century, however, the private confession became very uncommon, "due to the mishandling of priests and molestations from the Mohammadans".[57]

As regards the sacrament of Penance among the St Thomas Christians Prof. Dominic Vechoor rightly affirms: "There is a rich treasure that lies hidden in the variety of reconciliatory and penitential rites, which the St Thomas Christians of India practised, adapting them to their culture, genius, tradition and history. They used different forms for the celebration and experience of God's mercy and forgiveness of sins. The penitential discipline of this ancient Christian community also belongs to its faith patrimony, which is commonly designated as 'the Way and law of St. Thomas' (*Mar Thoma Margam*) with its Eastern and Indian identity".[58]

Among the St Thomas Christians in India, communitarian penitence was very common, although the practice of individual confession was not absent.[59] The individual administration of the

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Kingdom, A Study in Early East Syriac Tradition, London 2006, 199-203; Y. D. Hurmizd, "The Sacrament of Penance and Forgiveness of Sins in the Church of the East", in Pro Orinete, *Syriac Dialogue* VI, Vienna 2004, 161-163.

[54] Cf. W. De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, 265-280; M. Anikuzhikattil, *Ecclesial Response in the Negativity in Human Life*, 325-329.

[55] Cf. M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", 357-364.

[56] See Badger, *Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 155-159.

[57] Cf. M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", 365.

[58] D. Vechoor, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 77.

[59] Cf. J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A. D.", 116; P. Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 188-189.

sacrament of penance, known as *pizhamoolal* in the vernacular, consisted of private confession and absolution by a priest, who also determined appropriate penance or remedies for the renewal of life.[60] At that time, holding his hand over the head of the penitent the priest would recite the following formula "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God absolves you from your sins".[61]

There existed different forms of communitarian reconciliatory service, which were greatly influenced by the Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu rituals. First of all, there was the penitential rite of incense, which consisted of public confession of sins, putting incense in a furnace in the middle of the church before the altar, embracing the smoke with the hands folded in the form of a cross over the chest and absolution by a priest with the prescribed prayers.[62]

There existed also different Indianized variations of the rite of *Hoosaya* in Malabar. For grave sins, after hearing confession and giving the penance, the priests led the penitents to the bishop for absolution.[63] This can be compared to the reserved sins according to the modern canonical terminology. Another manner of administering the sacrament of penance consisted of confession of sins, scriptural reading and absolution. The penitents asked forgiveness to the priests, who used to read certain biblical passages and then said the prayer of absolution. The Synod of Diamper misunderstood this venerable tradition and condemned it:

> For as much as there are some ignorant clergymen, who being desired by Christians to read the Gospels and prayers to them, or to give them the blessings on their heads, do ignorantly use the form of sacramental absolution saying, "I absolve you from your sins in the

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60 Cf. M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", 370; *Ecclesial Response in the Negativity in Human Life*, 346-347. *Piszha* = sin; *moolal* = confession. Hence the Malayalam word *pizhamoolal* literally means confession of sins.

61 J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A. D.", 116.

62 Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 58; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 238; J. F. Raulin, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo*, 274; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, 177; M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", 370.

63 Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VI, decree 14.

> name of the Father [...], wherefore the Synod does advertise and admonish them not to commit such an error, it being a most grievous sacrilege to apply the sacramental form, where it ought not to be [...].[64]

According to the Malabar tradition, public delinquents, apostates and sinners had to undergo the penance imposed upon them by the parish *yogam* (assembly). Afterwards they would be individually absolved at the door of the church by a priest.[65]

As at present, in the pre-Diamper Eucharistic liturgy also there was a well-developed and theologically rich rite of reconciliation, in preparation for Communion, which the later East Syrian commentators considered as a substitute for auricular confession.[66] This consists of the prayer for peace, penitential psalms, incensing service, the fraction and consignation of the Body and Blood of Christ, the deacon's invitation to the Christian faithful to repentance and mutual forgiveness, a kind confession of common sins, "sacramental absolution" and the Lord's Prayer.[67]

Notwithstanding all these elements, the Western missionaries judged that the sacrament of Penance was inexistent among the St Thomas Christians.[68] The sacrament did not exist among them

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[64] Synod of Diamper, session VI, decree 15.

[65] Cf. Paolino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 137; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 106; *The Thomas Christians*, 96; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 42; L. K. Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of Syrian Christians*, 133.

[66] Cf. Abdiso, *Ordo iudiciorum ecclesiasticorum*, J. M. Voste (ed. & tr.), Fonti, Serie II – Fascicolo XV, Caldei diritto antico II, Roma 1940, 100; Timothy II, *De septem Causis Sacramentorum Ecclesiae*, Vatican Syriac Codex 151, ff. 83r-119r; English translation of the chapter on the Eucharist: "On the Mysteries of the Body and Blood", in J. M. Kochuparampil, *The Mystery of the Eucharist* (unpublished doctoral dissertation at the Pontifical Oriental Institute), Rome 2000, 196.

[67] See P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 61-67; for datails, M. Anikuzhikattil, *Ecclesial Response in the Negativity in Human Life*, 363-394; V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana: The Eucharistic Celebration of the Chaldeo-Indian Church*, Kottayam 1998, 244-248.

[68] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 58; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 238;

according to the philosophy of Aristotle, but it was present according to the biblical, apostolic and patristic traditions. Coerced by the missionaries Mar Jacob (1503-1550) had translated the Latin formula of absolution into Syriac, which Mar Joseph further perfected. About the sacrament of Penance among the St Thomas Christians Bishop Francis Ros wrote:

> They were not making use of the sacrament of Confession before Holy Communion. Grown-ups and all children without any distinction used to receive the Communion. I remember to have heard the confession of some of these old Christians, who had received Communion many times without confessing [...]. Mar Jacob, who was governing this Church when the Portuguese came to India, introduced the sacrament of Confession seeing that the Portuguese were confessing. Mar Abraham afterwards resisted this very much. By no means did he want to accept this sacrament, since they do not have it in Babylon [...]. The said Mar Joseph translated from Latin into Chaldean the words of the formula of the absolution better than they had been translated first by Mar Jacob. [69]

The Synod of Diamper practically abolished the different modes of communitarian public penitential service, except the one in the *Qurbana*. It ordered the complete conformation of the doctrinal, liturgical and disciplinary aspects of the sacrament of Penance to the Latin tradition. Only private auricular confession according to the scholastic theology of matter and form was considered valid.

Session VI	The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Penance.
Matter	Contrition of heart, confession of the mouth and satisfaction for sins.
Form	I absolve you from all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Minister	Priests, who have licence to absolve (and obviously bishops).

Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, 146-147; F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 331.

[69] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 333.

In the first fifteen decrees of session VI dedicated to the sacrament of Penance the Synod enacted strict, rigid and coercive norms to induce the Christian faithful to private confession. Excommunication was prescribed for those who had neglected to confess at least once a year during the time of Lent or at Easter and for the heads of families who had not sent the family members and slaves for confession.[70] The Synod ordered the confession of: all those who have completed eight years, since they are capable of mortal sin, those who are sick or in danger of death under the threat of denying ecclesiastical funeral and of women before childbirth.[71] It prohibited the priests from hearing confession without the license of the bishop in writing, and reserved some sins to the Pope, the Holy Office of Inquisition or to the bishop.[72] The insistence of the Synod on the necessity of confession should be understood in the light of the missionary opinion on the inexistence of the sacrament of Penance among the St Thomas Christians.

Precisely with regard to confession before Communion, "The Synod does declare and teach that no Christian, how contrite so ever for his sins, may lawfully come to receive the divine sacrament of the altar, being guilty of mortal sin, without having first confessed all his sins entirely, to some approved priests that has authority to receive his confession [...]".[73] It is not lawful for priests, having the least scruple of any mortal sin, to celebrate the *Qurbana*, without sacramental confession. Moreover all priests, even those who have no scruple of any sins, are ordered to confess at least once a week.[74] Since the Synod imposed innumerable unnecessary obligations under mortal sin, it was impossible for the priests to live without the scruple of mortal sin and hence weekly confession became in fact inevitable.

Bishop Francis Ros endorsed the legislation of the Synod concerning annual confession and went further: "It is the tradition

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[70] Synod of Diamper, session VI, decrees 1 & 3.

[71] Synod of Diamper, session VI, decrees 2, 4-5.

[72] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VI, decrees 9-10 & 12.

[73] Synod of Diamper, session V, part 1, decree 3.

[74] Synod of Diamper, session V, part 1, decree 8.

of the Church that parishioners should confess their sin to the vicar to fulfil the obligation of annual confession. If they want to make their confession to another priest they should get permission of their vicar".[75] Confession to the vicar is considered as essential for the juridical fulfilment of the obligation for annual confession. With regard to the relationship between Confession and Communion, Ros decreed:

> Since Christ who is true God and true man is present in this sacrament, when we receive Him with purity of hearts we get innumerable blessings. But those who have not made a good confession when dare to receive this sacrament they make themselves worthy of eternal hell. So only those who have made a good confession can come for Communion.[76]

Because of the decrees of the Synod of Diamper and the subsequent legislation gradually the East Syrian practice – all who participate in the liturgy of the faithful after the dismissal rite also receive Communion – completely disappeared. The general idea was inculcated in the minds of the Christian faithful that each time they had to confess before Communion, that is Communion only once after each confession. Even today only a few receive Communion, though they are not conscious of any mortal sin.

2.4. Extreme Unction

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction was not fully developed in the East Syrian tradition. However, there are indications that the Church of the East had prayers specifically said over the sick and prayers for the blessing of oil for healing the sick, whether or not this was understood as a sacrament.[77] Since the St Thomas

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[75] F. Ros, *Diocesan Statutes, Codex Borgiano Indiano* 18, fol. 51; Scaria Zacharia, *The Statutes of Ros: 1606 AD* (Malayalam), in *Randu Praachiina Gadya Krithikal*, Changanacherry 1976, 138.

[76] F. Ros, *Diocesan Statutes, Codex Borgiano Indiano* 18, fol. 36; Scaria Zacharia, *The Statutes of Ros: 1606 AD,* 132.

[77] J. Kelaita, *Liturgy of the Church of the East*, Mosul 1928, 194-195; W. De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern* (*OCA* 133), Roma 1947, 281-283; P. Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 189 & 225; L. Arangassery, The Anointing of the Sick, Eastern Perspectives", in A. G. Kollamparampil & J. Perumthottam (eds.) *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom,*

Christians followed the East Syrian sacramental system, anointing of the sick as understood in the West after the Council of Trent did not exist among them.

The priests blessed the sick with appropriate prayers, read Gospel passages over them and placed upon their bodies verses from the Holy Bible written on palm leaf or paper. Sometimes the sick were given water to drink in which was mixed some earth taken from the tomb of Apostle Thomas.[78] Such celebration of the last rite should be considered in the background of the fact that even in the West Extreme Unction was not considered as a sacrament in the first millennium.[79]

According to the Western missionaries, the sacrament of Extreme Unction was unknown to the St Thomas Christians.[80] However, this sacrament began to be administered among them from the time of Metropolitan Mar Joseph (1555-1569), who translated "the mere form" of this sacrament from Latin into Chaldean.[81] The Synod of Diamper, after the doctrinal part, enacted only three decrees on the sacrament of Extreme Unction. As in the case of the other sacraments, the Synod of Diamper clearly defined its matter, form and minister according to the scholastic system.

Changanassery 1997, 385-391; G. Alencherry, "A Reply to the Paper of K. M. George", in Pro Oriente, *Syriac Dialogue* V, Vienna 2003, 74-75.

[78] Cf. J. Vellian, "The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church", 182; P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 100-101; *The Thomas Christians*, 88-89; J. Hilarion, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A. D." 116; G. Alencherry, "A Reply to the Paper of K. M. George", 74-75; P. Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 189-190 & 225; L. Arangassery, "The Anointing of the Sick, Eastern Perspectives", 392-393.

[79] For example the list of sacraments given by St Peter Damian (1007-1072) did not include Extreme Unction. *Patrologia Latina* 144, 897.

[80] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 58-59; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes, Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes,* 238-239; F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 333; A. Monserrat, "Informacion de los christianos de S. Thomé", 518; Alexander Valignano, Report in 557, J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. III, 804; Matteo Ricci, Letter of 18 January 1580, J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. XI, 844.

[81] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 333.

Session VI	The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.
Matter	The oil of olive blessed by a bishop; anointing of the sick person on the eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, loins, reins.
Form	By this holy anointing and his most tender mercy may our Lord forgive you all the sins you have committed by the sight, and so on, naming every part or sense as it is anointed.
Minister	Only priests.

The Synod of Diamper judged that "in this bishopric there has not been hitherto any use of the sacrament of Extreme Unction, in which for want of catholic instruction, there has been no knowledge of the institution, effects, or efficacy thereof".[82] Hence the Synod ordered the administration of the sacrament of Extreme Unction to the sick "according to the Roman ceremonial, which is to be translated into Syriac, and kept in all churches" and indicated the correct manner of anointing the different parts of the body.[83] The Synod also commanded the confessors to instruct the sick persons and other faithful with regard to the doctrine, efficacy and necessity of this sacrament, and gave detailed directives to the priests on the manner of going to the houses of the sick, carrying the things necessary for the administration of this sacrament.[84]

After the Synod of Diamper the administration of the sacrament of Extreme Unction according to the Latin rite became common among the St Thomas Christians. Already in 1604 Bishop Francis Ros could write: "[...] now by the diligence of the Fathers of the Society who translated well from Latin into Chaldean the form, prayers and the ceremonies of this sacrament, it is already in common use in the whole of Serra (Malabar); and people are

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[82] Synod of Diamper, session VI, *Extreme Unction*, decree 1.

[83] Synod of Diamper, session VI, *Extreme Unction*, decree 1.

[84] Synod of Diamper, session VI, *Extreme Unction*, decrees 2 & 4.

grateful for that, nor do they consider anyone fortunate who does not receive it before dying".[85]

2.5. Holy Orders

Generally the validity of the sacred Orders, conferred according to the East Syrian tradition, was not questioned even by the Western missionaries. However, the third provincial Council of Goa (1585), in which Mar Abraham, the Metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians was constrained to participate, declared that the holy Orders conferred by him according to the Chaldean rite were invalid because of the lack of proper matter. With regard to this, Alexander Valignano SJ in his letter to the Jesuit General Claudio Acquaviva dated 17 December 1585 stated:

> Among other things it was found that sacred Orders were conferred in such a way that it seemed to us and to the whole Council that the candidates were not really ordained, because, though the substance of the *form* was somehow present in the words, the *matter* necessary for this sacrament was not applied in any manner, since in the consecration of the priests neither the chalice with wine nor the paten with bread was handed over to them, but only the Missal. The same fault of the matter was also found in conferring all the other Orders.[86]

In fact, departing from the scriptural, apostolic and patristic traditions and the millennial common practice of the Church, from the beginning of the eleventh century the Latin Church began to consider the handing over of the instruments (*traditio instrumentorum*) to the candidate as the matter for conferring the holy Orders. After treating the five sacraments, the Council of Florence explicitly stated:

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[85] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 333.

[86] Alessandro Valignano, Letter to the Jesuit General Claudio Acquaviva, dated 17 December 1585, in J. Wicki, "Quellen zum 3. Provinzialkonzil von Goa (1585)", *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 5 (1973) 382-407; Original text and English translation in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 184-191; cf. also, A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 9; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 40.

> The sixth is the sacrament of Orders. Its matter is the object by whose handing over the Order is conferred. So the priesthood is bestowed by the handing over of a chalice with wine and a paten with bread; the diaconate by the giving of the book of the gospels; the subdiaconate by the handing over of an empty chalice with an empty paten on it; and similarly for the other Orders by allotting things connected with their ministry [...].[87]

Despite this affirmation neither any ecumenical council nor the Apostolic See of Rome ever declared invalid the holy Orders conferred in the Eastern Churches without the handing on of the instruments. Notwithstanding this, in accordance with the Latin position of that time the provincial council of Goa judged invalid all the holy Orders conferred by Mar Abraham over a period of 28 years (1557-1585) and enjoined him to re-consecrate all persons ordained by him, utilizing the matter and form of the Roman rite. Since the ordination to priesthood was also declared invalid, there followed automatically the drastic consequence of the invalidity of all the sacraments administered by those priests.

After the conclusion of the provincial council, under the guidance of Francis Ros SJ, appointed by the same council as an aid to Mar Abraham for the execution of its decrees in Malabar, the Roman liturgical books were translated into Syriac. The Latin Pontifical was also translated and Mar Abraham re-ordained some of his priests according to the Latin rite in Syriac language. In the letter to the Jesuit General Claudio Aquaviva on 6 January 1587 Ros wrote:

> [...] already the books began to be corrected and the clerics who had not been rightly ordained were re-ordained in the Roman manner in Syriac language, because during the last year the Archbishop and I together made a Pontifical of all ordinations according to the Latin rite and translated it into Syriac.[88]

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[87] Cf. The Council of Florence, session 8 (22 November 1439); Bull of Union with the Armenians, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, no. 1326; *The Christian Faith*, no. 1705; N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 549.

[88] Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), *Goa-Mal.* 13, fol. 344; J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. XIV (1979) 565.

The Synod of Diamper confirmed the position of the provincial council of Goa and definitively determined the matter and form of the sacrament of holy Orders in harmony with the Latin tradition. After the preliminary doctrinal statement, the Synod enacted 23 decrees on the discipline of the clergy, among which the endorsement of obligatory celibacy, already in vogue especially after the third provincial council of Goa in 1585.

Session VII	The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders.
Matter	Handing on the instruments: priests–the chalice with wine and the paten with bread; deacons–book of the gospels; sub-deacons and other minor Orders – an empty chalice and paten.
Form	Not the consecratory prayer at the moment of the imposition of hands, but "the words spoken by the bishop when he delivers to everyone that which belongs to his ministry and the exercise of his order".
Minister	Only Bishops.

The Synod of Diamper also substituted the minor Orders of the East Syrian tradition with those of the Latin Church at that epoch, namely porter, lector, exorcist and acolyte.[89]

The Western missionaries, the prelates of the provincial council of Goa and the perpetrators of the Synod of Diamper could not even imagine that on 30 November 1947 Pope Pius XII would make the following solemn declaration:

> By virtue of our supreme apostolic authority we declare with sure knowledge and, as far as it may be necessary, we determine and ordain: the matter of the holy Orders of diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate is the laying on of hands alone and the sole form is the words determining the application of the matter, words by which the effects of the sacrament -- that is, the power of Order and the grace of the Holy Spirit -- are unequivocally signified, and which for this reason are accepted and used by the Church. This leads us to declare

[89] Synod of Diamper, session VII, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders.*

> and, if other provisions have been legitimately made in the past at any time, we now determine that, at least in future, the handing over of the instruments is not necessary for the validity of the holy Orders of the diaconate, the presbyterate and the episcopate.[90]

With this decision of the Pope the Latin Church returned to the apostolic, scriptural and patristic traditions, as well as to the millennial common tradition of the Churches of the East and the West. Moreover all discussions about the validity of holy Orders of those Eastern Churches which do not have the ceremony of the handing on of the instruments definitively terminated.

2.6. Matrimony

In the East Syrian tradition from time immemorial very extensive religious ceremonies existed for the solemnization of marriage. The complex religious celebration included the rites of: consent or sending the ring, joining the right hands of the stewards, betrothal consisting of blessing of the chalice, cross and ring, coronation and blessing of the spouses, erection of the bridal chamber and dismantling of the bridal chamber.[91] The priest who blesses the things and the persons is considered the dispenser of the mystery of marriage.[92]

None of the aforementioned ceremonies of the East Syrian tradition existed among the St Thomas Christians, who developed an "Indian rite" of marriage, adapting and Christianizing the religious and cultural items of Hindu marriage ceremonies in South India. The essentials of this rite consisted of the tying of the *thali* at the bride's neck by the groom, who then presented the *mantrakody*

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[90] Apostolic constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis, AAS* 40 (1948) 6; *Enchiridion symbolorum*, no. 3859; *The Christian Faith*, no. 1737.

[91] P. Yousif, "La celebration du mariage dans le rite chaldeen", in Giustino Farnedi (ed.), *La celebrazione cristiana del matrimoni, simboli e testi*, Atti del II congresso internazionale di liturgia, tenutosi a Roma dal 27 al 31 maggio 1985, Roma 1986, 261-282; L. Edakalathur, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, Rome 1994, 126-150; P. Pallath, *Matrimonio tra cristiani indiani: il rito nella Chiesa siro-malabarese*, 41-43.

[92] P. Yousif, "La celebration du mariage dans le rite chaldeen", 229; W. De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, 256.

to her. All the social ceremonies and festivities before, during and after the rite were of South Indian origin.[93]

According to the Roman tradition marriage was considered as a contract, created by the consent of the parties. The consent was considered essential, and if made freely, sufficed to create a valid marriage, which was also a sacrament from the moment of the exchange of consent. Hence, it was possible to create a valid marriage, even without any authorized witnessing, either civil or ecclesiastical, and without any religious ceremony. Consequently there emerged the problem of clandestine marriages, since even purely private and secret exchange of consent between a man and a woman became a valid marriage.[94]

In order to counter the problem of clandestine marriages the Council of Trent promulgated the decree *Tametsi* on 11 November 1563. First of all the Council confirmed the validity of the clandestine marriages, especially those already contracted: "There is no doubt that secret marriages, entered by free consent of the parties, are true and valid marriages as long as the Church has not made them null". Then it stated:

> The holy Synod now renders incapable of marriage any who may attempt to contract marriage otherwise than in the presence of the parish priest or another priest with the permission of the parish priest or the ordinary, and two or three witnesses; and it decrees that such contracts are null and invalid, and renders them so by this decree".[95]

However, the Council did not define the matter and form of marriage, nor did it determine who the minister was. In some parts of Europe *Tametsi* was not promulgated and therefore in those parts, the expression of matrimonial consent was governed only by the natural law.[96] It is only in 1907, during the pontificate of Pope

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[93] For details and documentation, see Article One, no. 6.

[94] For a detailed discussion, T. Mackin, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: What is Marriage?*, New York 1982, 145-224.

[95] Council of Trent, 11 November 1563, Session 24, decree *Tametsi*, in *Enchiridion symbolorum*, nos. 1813-1816; N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, 756.

[96] P. Haffner, *The Sacramental Mystery*, 209.

Pius X that the obligation to marry according to the canonical form was extended to the whole Church.[97]

As we have indicated, in the Latin Church religious ceremony was not obligatory for a valid marriage up to the Council of Trent. With regard to the liturgical form the same Council stipulated only that

> the parish priest will, by questioning the man and woman, make sure of their consent and then say, *I join you together in marriage, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit* or use other words according to the accepted rite of each province.[98]

The Council even affirmed that "each Church in its place should retain its ancient rite, approved by the holy Church of Rome".[99]

In the Latin Church there existed different rites in different provinces and countries for the solemnization of marriage and other sacraments. The post Tridentine *Rituale Romanum* was published only in 1614.[100] Even then it was not obligatorily prescribed for the whole Latin Church, since at that epoch there existed different particular rituals.

The *Rituale Romanum* 1614 contained only a very simple marriage rite, as indicated by the Council of Trent. The rite consisted of the explicit manifestation of the consent, joining of the right hands of the spouses and the priestly pronouncement, "I join you in marriage in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit", blessing of a ring for the bride and a concluding prayer.[101] However, the *Rituale Romanum* explicitly stated: "Moreover, in addition to the aforementioned, if some provinces use other laudable customs and ceremonies for the celebration of the

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[97] Cf. The Sacred Congregation of the Council, decree *Ne Temere*, in *Enchiridion symbolorum*, nos. 3468-3469.

[98] N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* vol. 2, 756; in *Enchiridion symbolorum*, no. 1814.

[99] N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* vol. 2, 735.

[100] Sodi M.- Flores Arcas J. J. (edd.), *Rituale Romanum*, Editio Princeps (1614), Edizione anastatica, Introduzione e Appendice, *Monumenta Liturgica Concilii Tridentina* – 5, Città del Vaticano 2004.

[101] Sodi M.- Flores Arcas J. J. (edd.), *Rituale Romanum*, Editio Princeps (1614), 138-140.

sacrament of marriage, the holy Synod of Trent desires to preserve them".[102]

In the light of the legislation of the Council of Trent, which permitted other rites and ceremonies even in the Latin Church, the determination of the Synod of Diamper to obliterate the Indian Eastern rite of marriage among the St Thomas Christians is incomprehensible. As in the case of other sacraments, the Synod of Diamper condemned most of the inculturated items as expressions of heretical and pagan practices and prescribed the celebration according to the Latin rite.

Session VII	The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Matrimony & decrees 1-2.
Matter	Not precisely defined: the efficient cause is the consent of both parties, personally declared by words or signs.
Canonical form	Celebration in the presence of the parish priest or another priest with the permission of the parish priest or the ordinary, and two or three witnesses.
Liturgical form	Expression of the mutual consent in words: I, N. receive you, N. for my lawful wife, so as the Holy Mother Church of Rome does command; I, N. receive you, N. for my lawful husband, so as the Holy Mother Church of Rome does command; and the Priest, I, by the authority I have, do join you in marriage, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Minister	The spouses? (not decided).

As we have seen above, the Council of Trent did not determine the exact words to be used for the expression of the consent, but explicitly permitted that words can be used "according to the accepted rite of each province". Hence, the Council did not

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[102] Sodi M.- Flores Arcas J. J. (edd.), *Rituale Romanum*, Editio Princeps (1614), 140.

prescribe a uniform celebration even in the entire Latin Church, nor abolish the different rites of marriage existed in different provinces at that epoch. Since the intention of the Synod of Diamper was to completely substitute the Eastern rite with the Latin rite, regarding the form of marriage the Synod stipulated that "the priest shall give them the blessings, as they are in the Roman ceremonial of the administration of the sacraments, which is to be translated into Syriac, and to be used in all churches".[103] Moreover the Synod prohibited many of the Indian practices as "heathenish and superstitious".[104]

In the course of time many of the socio-cultural customs and indigenous practices disappeared. However, despite the strenuous efforts of the Latin bishops and missionaries in the succeeding centuries, some Christianized Indian elements like the use of *thali* or *minnu* and *manthrakody* survived, although these items did not find any place in the official liturgical books published after the Synod of Diamper.[105]

3. Francis Ros and the Implementation of the Synodal Decisions: An Eastern Church with Latin Rite

The translation of the Latin liturgical books into Syriac, unofficially began during the governance of Mar Jacob (1503-1550) and canonically approved in the third provincial Council of Goa (1585) was almost complete even before the Synod of Diamper. In fact, during the concluding ceremony of the Synod a Syriac translation of the Roman Ritual according to the use of the Archdiocese of Braga in Portugal was given to each parish priest, together with an altar stone, a small box with holy oils and a surplice.[106] Antonio De Gouvea explicitly affirmed that a ritual

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[103] Synod of Diamper, session VII, *Matrimony*, decree 2.

[104] Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VII, *Matrimony*, decrees 14-16.

[105] For details, see Article One, no. 6.

[106] Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 72; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 291; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 177.

book "written in Syriac or Chaldean in the form in which they would administer the sacraments, according to the Roman usage, copied out from the Baptistery of the Roman Sacramentary" was given to all vicars.[107]

Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin Bishop of the St Thomas Christians (1599-1624), effectively implemented the liturgical prescriptions of the Synod of Diamper, including the administration of the sacraments according to the Syriac translation of the Roman Ritual. From his time the sacramental liturgy of the St Thomas Christians was the liturgy of the Latin Church in Syriac language. With regard to this, in his Report on Malabar, written in 1604, Bishop Francis Ros himself stated:

> About twenty years back, through the diligence of the Fathers of the Society residing at Vaypicotta, the Book of the Rituals of all the sacraments including Orders, together with all their formulas, prayers and ceremonies was translated from Latin into Chaldean. All the parish priests of this Christianity are now using it in the administration of the sacraments. They differ from us in this matter only as regards the language, except that the saying of the Mass is in the ancient manner, but as corrected and approved by the most illustrious Primate of India, who reviewed and recognized the said Mass which was translated into Latin by the Fathers of the Society.[108]

As the first Latin Bishop of the St Thomas Christians, Ros obliged the priests to use the Latin liturgical books in Syriac. Consequently, "All the parish priests of this Christianity are now using" the Roman ritual in the administration of the sacraments and "they differ from us in this matter only as regards the language, except the saying of the Mass is in the ancient manner, but as corrected and approved by the most illustrious Primate of India". As Prof. Jacob Vellian rightly states: "The policy of Latinization was adopted and legalized in the Synod of Diamper, but it was Bishop Ros who applied it officially and extended it further to

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[107] A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 72; P. Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 291.

[108] F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 335.

change the whole physiognomy of the liturgy of the Malabar Church".[109]

In addition to the liturgical texts of the sacraments, the Synod of Diamper enjoined that even those of other liturgical ceremonies such as exorcisms of the Church, blessings of holy water, ashes, chains and branches, burials of the dead, litanies, purification of defiled churches, as well as processions were to be translated from the Roman ceremonial into Syriac and to be kept in all churches.[110] The Synod of Diamper abolished the Indian manner of making holy water and commanded all priests to bless it "by throwing holy salt into it, according to the custom of the universal Church, as is directed by the Roman ceremonial, translated into Syriac".[111]

4. Printing of Roman Ritual in Syriac

After the Synod of Diamper, on the occasion of the canonical visits conducted by Menezes all the Syriac liturgical texts for the celebration of the sacraments, together with the other Syriac books, were burned.[112] Hence, there was only the Syriac translation of the Roman Ritual (*Rituale Romanum*), which remained in manuscript form for more than 175 years. Only in 1775 *Ordo Chaldaicus Ministerii Sacramentorum Sanctorum*, the Syriac translation from Roman Ritual, was printed and published under the auspices of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. The *Ordo* contained only the rites of Baptism, Penance (confession), Extreme Unction (anointing of the sick) and Marriage. Since it was intended for priests, logically it did not contain the sacrament of confirmation, which was to be administered by the bishop according to the Latin tradition.

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109 J. Vellian, "The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church", 187.

110 Cf. Synod of Diamper, session VII, decree 9; session VIII, decrees 17, 21-23 & 29.

111 Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 18; see also Article One, no. 14.

112 Cf. Synod of Diamper, session III, decrees 14-16 & session V, *The Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass*, decree 1; cf. also P. Malekandathil, (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 294-296 & 351.

In 1845 the second edition of the Syriac Roman Ritual, *Ordo Chaldaicus Ministerii Sacramentorum Sactorum, quae perficiuntur a sacerdotibus juxta morem Ecclesiae Malabaricae, Superiorum permissu editus*, came into light.[113] In addition to the aforementioned sacraments, this book contained also other ceremonies and sacramentals translated from the Roman Ritual, such as penitential psalms and prayers for the moribund, form of imparting apostolic blessing at the moment of death, the rite for the blessing and aspersion of holy water, formulas for blessing places, candles, Easter eggs, new fruits, bread and other food items, statutes and images, new cross, as well as formula for purifying defiled churches.

As it is evident the *Ordo Chaldaicus* of 1845 contained also some sacramentals and blessings. In the course of time all other sacramentals, popular devotions, rites of blessings and even para-liturgical ceremonies were either translated from Latin into Syriac or introduced in Latin itself. However, the greater part of the office of the dead continued to be Oriental; only the rite of the burial of infants was translated from the Roman rite into Syriac.[114]

Practically the *Ordo Chaldaicus* of 1845 was used by the Catholic St Thomas Christians for the administration of the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Extreme Unction and Marriage until the introduction of partially reformed liturgical texts in Malayalam language in 1968, which practically maintained the matter and form of the sacraments and many other liturgical elements as determined by the Synod of Diamper.[115] The Roman rite of the sacrament of confirmation was translated into Syriac during the time of the Chaldean Archbishop Mar Abraham, but the text was never officially printed, since there was no urgent need.

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[113] In addition to the title we can find the following information in Latin language: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide; Nihil obstat Franciscus Mehaseb Maronita. Imprimatur Fr. Dominicus Buttaoni O. P. S. P. A. M. Imprimatur Joseph Canali Archiep. Colossen. Vicesgerens.

[114] For details, see P. J. Podipara, *Ritus et Libri Liturgici Syro-Malabarici*, Thevara 1933.

[115] *The Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church, Sacraments* (Malayalam), Ernakulam 1968.

Generally the Latin bishops who governed the St Thomas Christians after Francis Ros did not know Syriac and hence they celebrated the said sacrament in Latin itself. For the same reason, the Roman Pontifical was also not officially printed and the bishops used to confer holy Orders according to the Roman Pontifical in Latin itself, until the reformed East Syrian Pontifical in Malayalam came into force in 1959.

Conclusion

Before the sixteenth century the St Thomas Christians administered the sacraments of Christian initiation and holy Orders according to the East Syrian tradition with intelligent Indian adaptations. For the sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance), Marriage and Extreme Unction they developed "Indian rites" consonant with the East Syrian tradition, but without any watering down of the essentials of the Catholic faith. Applying Greek philosophy and scholastic theological concepts of matter and form the Western missionaries declared that all the sacraments of the St Thomas Christians were invalid, inexistent or defective. However, on the basis of our study we hold that according to apostolic, scriptural and patristic doctrines and the common tradition of the Church in the first millennium valid sacraments existed among the St Thomas Christians and the said sacred mysteries conferred grace upon them according to the design of God.

The Synod of Diamper completely substituted the Eastern theology, liturgy and discipline of the sacraments with those of the Latin-Portuguese tradition. After the Synod, practically the sacramental liturgy of the St Thomas Christians was the liturgy of the Latin Church in Syriac language. Such replacement of Eastern sacramental theology with the Greek philosophical system and Western scholastic theology, hampered the spontaneous evolution and growth of an authentic Indian Eastern sacramental theology, steeped in apostolic traditions, Sacred Scripture and patristic doctrine. If the original rites of the St Thomas Christians, which could have even claimed apostolic origin, had not been dismantled, today there would have existed another authentic Christian tradition, enriching the heritage of the universal Church and witnessing to its existential catholicity.

Article Three

RESTORATION OF THE SYRIAC PONTIFICAL AND THE BEGINNING OF LITURGICAL REFORM IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Introduction

We have already published a book containing forty-four important documents concerning the revision and publication of the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Pontifical.[1] The documents presented in the book, together with our brief introductions, meticulously reconstruct the main events connected with the Pontifical from 1896 to 1958, highlighting the circumstances of the start of liturgical reform in the Syro-Malabar Church. In this short study, based mainly on the documents published in the aforementioned book, we will focus our attention on the endeavours of the Western missionaries to introduce the Roman Pontifical among the St Thomas Christians, the effective use of the Roman Pontifical since the Synod of Diamper in 1599, the historical and liturgical context of the revision and restoration of the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Pontifical with papal approval, the compilation of a new series of books for pontifical ceremonies in some dioceses and finally the promulgation of a canonically approved Pontifical for the entire Syro-Malabar Church.

1. Use of Roman Pontifical in the Malabar Church from 1585 to 1896

From time immemorial until the arrival of the Western missionaries in the XVI century the St Thomas Christians, who followed the basic East Syrian liturgical tradition, used the Syriac

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[1] P. Pallath & J. Kollara, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac and the Beginning of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam 2012. While this article was in preparation a request reached me from *Christian Orient* for a liturgical study and thus it was given for publication. See *Christian Orient*, vol. XXXIX, no. 2 (2018) 51-76.

or Chaldean Pontifical for ordinations and other episcopal ceremonies.[2] As we have already seen, the provincial council of Goa in 1585 judged that the holy Orders conferred according to the Syriac Pontifical were invalid and enjoined that the Roman Pontifical should be translated into Syriac for the use of the Malabar Church. In accordance with this order really the Roman Pontifical (the rites of ordination) was translated into Syriac and the last Chaldean Metropolitan, Mar Abraham himself ordained some priests using such Latin-Syriac texts.[3]

With the Synod of Diamper the hierarchical relationship of the Church of St Thomas Christians with the Chaldean patriarchate was severed and Latin bishops were appointed to govern them. The aforementioned partial Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical was never printed, because the Latin bishops who governed the Church until 1896, with the exception of the first bishop Francis Ros SJ (1599-1624) did not know Syriac. Hence the succeeding Latin bishops performed all pontifical ceremonies, such as the consecration of churches, consecration of holy oils, all ordinations and the sacrament of confirmation according to the Roman Pontifical in Latin language.

However, the Syriac Roman Pontifical was again utilized for liturgical celebrations for a short period of time. Towards the end of the second apostolic mission of Bishop Joseph of St Mary Sebastiani to eradicate the schism in the Indian Church, originated after the *Coonan* Cross Oath (1653), constrained by the circumstances, he elected and consecrated Fr Alexander Parampil as bishop of the Catholic St Thomas Christians on 1 February 1663. For the use of this native bishop, before his departure from Malabar on 14 February 1663, Sebastiani made arrangements for the improvement of the rites of Ordination already translated from Latin into Syriac and used by the first Latin Bishop Francis Ros (1599-1624) and for the translation of some other parts of the Roman Pontifical.[4] After the death of Alexander Parampil on 2

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[2] Cf. Article Seven, no. 4.

[3] For details, see Article Two, no. 2.5.

[4] Cf. Sebastiani Giuseppe di Santa Maria, *Seconda Speditione all'Indie Orientali*, Roma 1672, 147; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St*

January 1687 native bishops were not appointed and hence the partial Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical, remained in the manuscript form, was not used for liturgical celebrations. Several years later when Joseph Kariattil was consecrated bishop in 1783, he utilized a copy of the said translations found in Portugal for a few Pontifical ceremonies.[5] In brief, we can affirm that from 1585 on, the Roman Pontifical began to be used for episcopal ceremonies in the Indian Eastern Church, and during short intervals the Syriac version of the same was employed.

2. Historical Context of the Restoration of Syro-Malabar Pontifical

After about three centuries (1599-1886) of Western governance over the St Thomas Christians, when the Latin hierarchy was established in India on 1 September 1886, the ancient archdiocese of Cranganore was definitively suppressed, the vicariate apostolic of Verapoly was elevated to the status of a metropolitan archdiocese of the Latin Church with Quilon as its suffragan see and all the Catholic St Thomas Christians became members of the said archdiocese.[6] However, with the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887, Pope Leo XIII separated the Eastern Catholics from the Latin Christians of the archdiocese of Verapoly and constituted for the former two Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic, Trichur and Kottayam (later named Changanacherry),[7] but the vicars apostolic were still Latins: Charles Lavigne, titular bishop of Milevum and vicar apostolic of

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Thomas Christians in India and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani, Changanachery 2006, 215.

[5] Cf. T. Paremmakkal, *The Varthamanappusthakam*, translated into English with an introduction and notes by P. J. Podipara (*OCA* 190), Rome 1971, 238-239.

[6] Cf. Leo XIII, *Humanae salutis auctor*, 1 September 1886, *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. 5, Romae 1886, 164-179; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents concerning the Catholic Church in India*, Kottayam 2004, 152-173.

[7] Cf. Leo XIII, *Quod iampridem*, 20 May 1887, *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. VII, Romae 1888, 106-108; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents*, 190-193.

Changanacherry (1887-1896) and Adolf Edwin Medlycott, titular bishop of Tricomia and vicar apostolic of Trichur (1887-1896).

With the apostolic brief *Quae rei sacrae* of 28 July 1896 Pope Leo XIII reorganized the territory, erecting the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry.[8] Three native priests were appointed as vicars apostolic: John Menacherry, titular bishop of Paralus and vicar apostolic of Trichur, Mathew Makil, titular bishop of Tralles in Asia and vicar apostolic of Changanacherry and Aloysius Pazheparambil, titular bishop of Tium and vicar apostolic of Ernakulam. The Apostolic Delegate Ladislao Michele Zaleski consecrated the first three Indian bishops on 25 October 1896 in the cathedral church of Kandy in Sri Lanka, where he had the residence. Later with the apostolic brief *In Universi* dated 29 August 1911 Pope Pius X separated all the Southist parishes and churches from the vicariates of Changanacherry and Ernakulam and erected the new vicariate of Kottayam exclusively for the Southist community.[9]

3. Native Bishops and the Question of the Pontifical

With the consecration of the first three Syro-Malabar bishops there emerged the question, which Pontifical the new bishops should use for the consecration of churches, ordinations and blessing of the oil. During the first meeting after the episcopal consecration, the first three Syro-Malabar bishops unanimously decided to use the Roman Pontifical, translated into Syriac, because according to them, among the three Pontificals (Roman, Antiochene and Chaldean) the Roman Pontifical was the best suited to the Syro-Malabar rite. As regards this decision on 31 October 1896 Apostolic Delegate Zaleski wrote to Propaganda Fide as follows: "Last Monday we had a long conversation, which the Vicars Apostolic called a liturgical conference. I asked whether

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[8] Leo XIII, *Quae rei sacrae, 28 July 1896, Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta, vol. XVI,* Romae 1897, 229-232; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents,* 194-197.

[9] For the apostolic letter *In Universi,* see Canc. Brev. Ap. Pius X an. 1911, Divers., lib. IX, pars 2, 607; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents,* 198-201.

it would not be possible to supplicate His Holiness to simply grant them the Pontifical of the Syriac Church. But the bishops responded that this was not possible and that they and also the people would prefer that a simple translation of the Roman Pontifical be made. And in fact the Syro-Malabar rite has to be considered as a special rite. Also the holy Mass differs very much from the Syriac or Chaldean holy Mass. Also their Missal is different, so that they cannot use the Chaldean (Syriac) Missal".[10] Towards the end of the same letter Zaleski summarizes the result of the first liturgical meeting of the Syro-Malabar bishops:

> The fact is: 1) That a Pontifical for the Syro-Malabar rite does not exist and that it is urgent to have one, since now we have bishops of this rite.
>
> 2) That, in the opinion of these very same bishops, neither the Syrian (Antiochene) Pontifical, nor the Chaldean one can be used in the Syro-Malabar rite.
>
> 3) That, still according to the bishops, of the three Pontificals (Roman, Syrian and Chaldean) the Roman one is best suited to the Syro-Malabar rite.[11]

Apostolic Delegate Zaleski, who considered the Syro-Malabar rite as a modified Roman rite in Syriac language, wholeheartedly supported the idea and through his letters endeavoured to obtain the permission of the Apostolic See for the use of the Roman Pontifical. With regard to the decision of the first Syro-Malabar bishops to translate the Roman Pontifical into Syriac and the permission of the Propaganda Fide for the translation and for the use of the Roman Pontifical in Latin until the Roman-Syriac Pontifical would be ready, the Apostolic Delegate Zaleski wrote on 28 April 1905:

> After the consecration of the three native Syro-Malabar bishops, the question of the Pontifical which they had to use in the episcopal

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[10] ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 13; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 27.

[11] ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 13, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 27-28.

> ceremonies came to the fore, since a Syro-Malabar Pontifical did not exist at all.
>
> As at that time the three above-mentioned bishops were my guests in Kandy, I thought it was better to let them decide the question among themselves and, after having done this, they came to me saying that they had unanimously decided to ask the Holy See for the permission to simply translate the Roman Pontifical into Syriac language.
>
> Then I asked why they had required the Roman Pontifical instead of the Chaldean one.
>
> They answered that the Roman Pontifical was in conformity with the Syro-Malabar Missal and Ritual, while the Chaldean Pontifical had so many discrepancies that to be able to use it in Malabar it would be necessary to change the Mass also.
>
> Therefore a request was made to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda which ordered that the Roman Pontifical be translated into Syriac for the use of the Syro-Malabar bishops, granting them in the meantime the faculty to use the Latin Pontifical until the translation was made and approved by the same Congregation.[12]

Thus the first Syro-Malabar bishops obtained the permission to translate the Roman Pontifical into Syriac and the faculty to use the same Pontifical in Latin language until the approval of the Syriac translation.

The Pontifical which the Syro-Malabar bishops decided to translate was: *Pontificale Romanum Jussu Editum a Benedicto XIV et Leone XIII recognitum et castigatum.* As is evident from the title the Roman Pontifical in question, first promulgated by Pope Benedict XIV, was again revised and approved by Leo XIII, and published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1895. This Pontifical is a huge liturgical book with 329 pages. After the preliminary items the book is divided into three parts with an appendix (pp. 302-329). The first part (pp. 17-122) contains various rites regarding persons such as the sacrament of confirmation, minor and major ordinations, blessings and consecration of kings, queens, military personal etc.; the second

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[12] Report of Zaleski, 28 April 1905, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia,* Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 14; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 47.

part (pp. 123-225) enshrines the blessing of the first stone for the building of a new church, consecration of churches and about 27 items of blessings of things on various occasions; the third part (pp. 226-301) has 31 rites and ceremonies, including various rites for suspension, reconciliation, deposition, degradation and restitution of those in holy Orders, excommunication and absolution, the order for the solemn reception of kings and queens, etc. This is the Pontifical, which the first Syro-Malabar bishops decided to translate into Syriac.

4. Failed Attempts for the Translation of Roman Pontifical into Syriac under the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (1896-1917)

Even about nine years after the aforementioned decision, the Syro-Malabar bishops did not succeed in translating the entire Roman Pontifical into Syriac although some attempts were made. In fact two expert priests were selected to translate the Roman Pontifical into Syriac. They translated only the rites of ordination and some other parts of the Pontifical and sent them to Vicar Apostolic Menacherry, who had promised to revise and correct the text, before forwarding it to Rome, but nothing happened. In the aforementioned letter of 28 April 1905 Zaleski reported:

> Meanwhile years passed and nothing was heard about the translation. Upon my observations, the response given was that it was an arduous and difficult work, which required time. However, rumours had already spread that there were discrepancies among the bishops and that one or two of them had come under the influence of (Emmanuel) Nidiri and other *Suriani* agitators.[13]

Although the three bishops were unanimous about the use of the Roman Pontifical in the Syro-Malabar Church, in the course of time divergences emerged as regards the translation to be used. Perhaps because the attempts for a fair translation failed, Pazheparambil and Makil wanted to obtain approval for the partial

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[13] ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 14, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 48.

translation of the Roman Pontifical used by two previous native bishops, Chandy (Alexander) Parambil (1663-1687) and Joseph Cariattil (1782-1786), while Menacherry preferred the new translation in preparation. On 20 November 1906 Pazheparambil wrote to the Propaganda Fide:

> Prior to us there were two Syro-Malabar bishops. The first one was Alexander Parambil in 1663 and the second was Joseph Cariattil in 1781 (1782), ex alumnus of the Urban College of Propaganda. Since the first bishop knew only the Syriac language, for his use (the rite of) ordinations, consecration of altars and the most holy oils etc., were translated into Syriac language, in Rome itself, by a certain Maronite of Mount Lebanon, called Joseph and, we think, with the mandate of Propaganda. This translation was sent to Malabar through the Carmelite Fathers and the most Rev. Lord Alexander Parambil used it for ordinations and other functions. The second bishop the most Rev. Lord Joseph Cariattil adopted the same translation for his use. Now I have in my archives the very same book which was in the possession of the most Rev. Lord Joseph Cariattil. Many times I have read and compared it with the Roman Pontifical and find that all items were accurately translated from the Roman Pontifical. However, ordinations were arranged according to our solemn Mass.
>
> Since the language of the Maronites is very refined Syriac – the Maronites know the Syriac language better than we Malabars – their style is better and clearer. Hence the translation made by our priests is greatly inferior to the version made by the said Maronite in Rome. Therefore we, the most Rev. Lord Makil, Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry and I wish to have approved by the Sacred Congregation for our use the translation made by the said Maronite [...].[14]

However, Menacherry proceeded according to the original decision. He judged that the translation made by the two aforementioned Malabar priests was very defective and decided to make his own new translation. Being aware of the move of the other two Vicars Apostolic, on 12 February 1907 he forwarded to

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[14] Letter of Pazheparambil to Propaganda Fide, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 15; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 50-51.

the Congregation the first part of the Pontifical (the rites of confirmation and sacred Ordinations) translated by him for approval. After obtaining information about such acts of Menacherry, on 23 May 1907 Pazheparambil wrote again to the Propaganda Fide, requesting approval for the old translation of the Pontifical used by Archbishop Cariattil:

> A few months ago I wrote to Your Lordship about the approval of our Syriac Pontifical. I said that I had an ancient Syriac version of the Roman Pontifical in my archives which was in the possession of the most illustrious and Rev. Joseph Cariattil, and Lord Makil and I wanted to have approval of this ancient version for our use in Malabar rather than some other new one. Hitherto I have not received any response to this letter of mine.
>
> Now I have heard from Lord Menacherry that the Cardinal Prefect required from him a new version of the Syriac Pontifical and he sent to Rome his translation of some parts of the Pontifical. The translation which Lord Menacherry sent was not revised by Lord Makil, nor by me. Therefore we do not know what kind of translation is this.
>
> Even now I and Lord Makil think that it would be better to approve the ancient version of Lord Joseph Cariattil for our use in Malabar.[15]

With the letter of 26 June 1907 signed by the Prefect and Secretary of Propaganda Fide, Vicar Apostolic Menacherry was informed of the request made by his two other brethren in the episcopate for the approval of the Syriac Roman Pontifical used by Bishop Cariattil. However, he was asked to continue with the translation since a good part had already been done, and to transmit the translation to the other Vicars Apostolic for their examination and observations. Menacherry protested against the move of the other two Vicars Apostolic, pointed out the defects and inconveniences of using this Pontifical and informed that the new translation of the remaining parts of the Roman Pontifical was progressing. Regarding the proposal of the other two *Suriani*

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[15] Letter of Pazheparambil to Propaganda Fide, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 53-54.

Vicars Apostolic to adopt the version of the Roman Pontifical used by Joseph Cariattil he wrote:

> I am amazed that these Vicars Apostolic could suggest this opinion to the Sacred Congregation while they were well aware of the huge and innumerable defects existing in this version. I cite some of them here:
>
> 1) In very many places the said version does not correspond to the Latin original. 2) The instructions preceding the conferring of each Order are completely omitted. 3) The Mass, which is celebrated and during which the Orders are conferred (according to that version), is not the ordinary Mass, but the sung Mass which is commonly celebrated for the dead together with many priests and about two hours are required to celebrate it. 4) In this version that part containing the sacrament of confirmation is not found. [...].[16]

Having evaluated the reasons espoused by Menacherry in the aforementioned letter with regard to the impossibility of immediately adopting the translation of the Pontifical used by Cariattil, on 28 August 1907 Propaganda Fide urged him to complete the translation of the entire Pontifical and transmit it to the Congregation for the necessary revision.[17] However, with the letter of 11 February 1908 Menacherry requested the Congregation to approve and print the first part of the Pontifical already sent on 12 February 1907, as it was of frequent use, also because priests and faithful began to protest against the use of Roman Pontifical in Latin for ordinations even ten years after the consecration of native bishops. He indicated the reasons for the approval of the partial translation as follows:

> Firstly, the clergy and people of the three vicariates of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, already disgusted, murmur against us bishops, since we are conferring the sacred Orders not in Syriac, but in Latin. Moreover with regard to this matter they are avowedly bringing out public leaflets, they are saying many things against us and against our manner of action, namely against the conferral of

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[16] Letter of Menacherry to Propaganda Fide, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 16; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 54-55.

[17] Cf. Letter of Propaganda Fide to Menacherry, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS, N. 15.

> sacred Orders in Latin language, even after the elapse of so many years after our consecration, that is to say, more than ten years [...].
>
> Secondly our Syriac Ritual which we use now is still today incomplete, because only the principal part, amended and approved by the Sacred Congregation in 1845 and printed in the press of the same Congregation, was given to us. However, another part of the Ritual, namely the Order of Baptism of Adults, was approved only in 1859 and was printed by the Sacred Congregation, and until today the other parts (of the Ritual) like the exorcism etc., remain to be done. Consequently there does not seem to be any inconvenience, if a part of our Pontifical, which more than once we should use in each year, is approved and printed [...].[18]

There were always priests and faithful in the entire Syro-Malabar Church who wanted to restore the venerable Eastern heritage and ecclesial identity, but the native bishops perceived it only as a question of language.

The project of obtaining approval for the Syriac Roman Pontifical used by Archbishop Joseph Cariattil was evidently abandoned. Hence the Syro-Malabar bishops demanded the approval of the first part of the Roman Pontifical, because it was of frequent use, while Propaganda Fide insisted that the Pontifical should be completely translated, in order to obtain its approval. Practically even after the elapse of several years the Syro-Malabar bishops failed to translate the Roman Pontifical into Syriac and hence they continued to use the said Pontifical in Latin for all episcopal ceremonies.

5. Renewed Attempts under the Congregation for the Oriental Church (1917-1931)

On 1 May 1917 Pope Benedict XV separated the Oriental section of Propaganda Fide and erected the 'Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church' with the motu proprio *Dei providentis* and the Syro-Malabar Church came under its authority.[19] By the

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[18] Letter of Menacherry to Propaganda Fide, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 17; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 57.

[19] Benedict XV, Motu Proprio *Dei providentis*, *AAS* 9 (1917) 529-531.

apostolic constitution *Romani pontifices* of 21 December 1923 Pope Pius XI established the Syro-Malabar hierarchy with Ernakulam as metropolitan see and Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan dioceses. After the erection of Oriental Congregation, especially after the constitution of hierarchy, the Syro-Malabar bishops, who had failed to accomplish even a complete translation of the Roman Pontifical, often requested the Congregation to approve the partial Syriac translation they had formerly submitted to Propaganda Fide.[20]

Because of such constant requests, the Congregation entrusted the examination of the partial Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical to the Chaldean Bishop of Amadiyyah, Mar Francis David, who with the letter of 6 June 1929 rejected the text, saying that it was full of ridiculous expressions, grammatical errors and defective literary style. Moreover he pointed out that the interpolation of ordination ceremonies of the Roman Pontifical in inappropriate places in the *Qurbana* destroyed its structural harmony and natural coherence. He proposed that either the Syro-Malabar bishops should also adopt the Latin Mass for the ordination ceremony or they should preserve and observe the Chaldean Pontifical in accordance with the policy of the Apostolic See with regard to the Oriental Churches. He concluded that the text was entirely defective and unworthy to be employed for liturgical celebrations.[21]

After evaluating the observations of Bishop Francis David the Oriental Congregation asked the then Apostolic Delegate Edward Aloysius Mooney to obtain from the Syro-Malabar bishops an emended and corrected translation. However, the bishops communicated to the Delegate that it was impossible for them to effect a better translation and requested him to get the work done in Rome under the auspices of the Congregation itself.[22] Surprisingly

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[20] Cf. *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 66-70.

[21] Vote of Chaldean Bishop Francis David, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 4; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 70-73.

[22] Letter of Apostolic Delegate Mooney to the Oriental Congregation, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; also in ACOC,

the Syro-Malabar bishops, who reverted to the said Congregation the responsibility of correcting the Syriac translation of a part of the Roman Pontifical, never thought of the comparatively easy task of revising and updating the Syro-Oriental Pontifical for the use of their Church.

6. Consultation of Experts (1932-1934)

The request of the Syro-Malabar bishops to the Oriental Congregation was against the very scope of its erection, namely the promotion and enhancement of Eastern liturgical and spiritual heritage. Considering the intricacy of the matter and its crucial importance for the whole Christian Orient, the Congregation decided to consult more experts. With the letter of 13 December 1932 the Congregation sought the opinion of three consultants: John of the Cross OCD, Emil Herman SJ and Cyril Koroleviskij SJ, on the opportunity or not of granting the Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical to the Syro-Malabar Church.

The first two expressed favourable opinion, since the Syro-Malabar rite was highly Latinized and since the Roman Pontifical was the only one used in the Church for a long time.[23] However, the third consultant Koroleviskij, instead of a simple vote, made a long scholarly study, analyzing the liturgical, historical and ecclesiological dimensions of the question and categorically rejected the idea of granting the Syriac translation of Roman Pontifical to the Syro-Malabar Church.[24] On 21 January 1933 the Congregation also consulted Mons. René Graffin, professor of the Catholic Institute in Paris and editor of *Patrologia Orientalis*, also with regard to the possibility of printing the Syriac Roman Pontifical under his supervision. He declared that, in his opinion it

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Ponenza del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 5; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 73-74.

[23] Votes of John of the Cross and Emil Herman, in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegati 7 & 8; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 75-79.

[24] The study of Cyril Koroleviskij, in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 10 as a separate fascicle; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 86-129.

was a mischief to permit the requested translation: he would not be disposed to supervise the printing of that version even if ordered by a superior, being sure this would mean cooperating in a mischief.[25]

With the letter of 13 December 1932, the Congregation for the Oriental Church also required the new Apostolic Delegate in the East Indies Leo Peter Kierkels to prepare an ample report, so as to arrive at a definitive solution with regard to the Pontifical. He was asked to take into account the historical circumstances of the Syro-Malabar faithful after the Synod of Diamper and the impression that could be created among them by the approval of the requested translation or the introduction of an Oriental Pontifical. He submitted the desired report on 22 June 1933. After evaluating the history of the Syro-Malabar Church and the state of the Syro-Malabar liturgy at that time, he concluded that the Latin Pontifical translated into Syriac would conform very well to the entire post-Menezian liturgy in use for three centuries and hence recommended the correction and approval of the Syriac Roman Pontifical.[26]

Given the contrasting opinions on this vital question, the Congregation consulted other scholars like Placid de Meester, professor of liturgy at the Greek College in Rome and Eugene Tisserant, the pro-prefect of the Vatican Library. Both of them, in agreement with Koroleviskij and Greffin, unanimously rejected the Syriac version of Latin Pontifical, since it was contrary to sound liturgical principles and to the policy of the Apostolic See with regard to the preservation and observation of Oriental rites.[27]

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[25] Cf. The Report of Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, in ACOC, *Ponenza del* 19.11.1934; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 144.

[26] Report of Apostolic Delegate Kierkels, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo I, PRLS; *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegato 9; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*,79-83.

[27] The votes of Placid de Meester and Eugene Tisserant, in ACOC, *Ponenza* del 19.11.1934, *Relazione con Sommario*, allegati 11-12; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 129-135.

7. The Plenary Meeting of the Congregation and the Decision of Pope Pius XI

From the time of the appointment of native vicars apostolic in 1896 on, all the Syro-Malabar bishops unanimously and persistently asked for the approval of the partial Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical. All the four Apostolic Delegates in India, Ladislao Michele Zaleski (1892-1916), Pietro Fumasoni Biondi (1916-1919), Pietro Pisani (1019-1924), Edward Aloysius Mooney (1926-1931) and Leo Peter Kierkels (1931-1952) recommended the Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical for the use of the Syro-Malabar Church. Among the consultants of the Oriental Congregation John of the Cross and Emil Herman favoured the approval of the Syriac Roman Pontifical, while the Chaldean Bishop Francis David and experts like Korolevskij, De Meester, René Graffin and Tisserant opposed such a provision, since it was contrary to sound liturgical principles and to the policy of the Holy See concerning the heritage of the Oriental Churches.

Considering the particular importance of the question and the contrasting opinions of the experts, the Congregation for the Oriental Church decided to discuss all aspects of the problem in the plenary assembly of 19 November 1934. Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, who had formerly been Apostolic Delegate in East Indies and who had then personally studied the question of the Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical for the use of the Syro-Malabar Church, was selected by the Oriental Congregation as the most suitable person for presenting a comprehensive report to the plenary assembly. In fact, he succinctly exposed the entire history of the efforts for the translation of the Roman Pontifical into Syriac, the endeavours of the Syro-Malabar bishops to obtain the approval of the Holy See and its decisions and provisions until that time.[28]

The Cardinals present in the plenary assembly of 19 November 1934, in spite of careful examination and fruitful

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[28] This report can be found in ACOC, in *Ponenze* dell'Anno 1934; also in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo II; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 142-155.

discussions, were unable to make a unanimous resolution concerning the approval or not of the Syriac translation of the Roman Pontifical for the use of the Syro-Malabar Church. Hence only a report of the plenary assembly was presented to Pope Pius XI on 1 December 1934, who made the historic decision to restore the ancient Chaldean Pontifical for the use of the Syro-Malabar Church and to constitute a special commission for the revision and printing of the said Pontifical. With regard to the decision of the Pope we get the following precise information:

> The Holy Father, having heard the report, has deigned to observe that Latinization is not to be encouraged among the Orientals. The Holy See does not want to Latinize but to catholicize. And then, half measures are neither generous nor fruitful. So continue in status quo, but at once appoint a commission for the revision of the ancient Pontifical, which can also be printed part by part (in fascicles). For the commission the Holy Father has deigned to propose the names of Msgr. Tisserant, Fr. Korolevskij, Msgr. Graffin, and Fr. De Meester. He wishes that the works be finished in the shortest time possible.[29]

Perhaps, this resolution of Pope Pius XI is the most important and most courageous decision personally taken by a Roman Pontiff with regard to the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church, even against the opinion of four Apostolic Delegates in the East Indies and the unanimous request of the bishops of the said Church. This momentous and authoritative papal decision paved the way for the liturgical restoration and reform in the Syro-Malabar Church, gradually reinstating the Eastern liturgical spirit and leading to the publication of new liturgical books.

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[29] "Il Santo Padre, udita la relazione, si è degnato di osservare che non bisogna incoraggiare fra gli Orientali il latinismo. La Santa Sede non vuole latinizzare, ma cattolicizzare. Le mezze misure poi non sono né generose né fruttuose. Si continui quindi nello *statu quo*, ma si nomini subito una Commissione incaricata della revisione del Pontificale più antico, che si potrà stampare anche a fascicoli. Per la Commissione si è degnato di fare i nomi di Mons. Tisserant, di Padre Korolevsky, di Mons. Graffin e di Padre de Meester. Vuole che i lavori siano condotti a termine nel più breve tempo possibile". See the Report of the audience with the Holy Father, in ACOC, *Ponenze* dell'Anno 1934 (Plenaria del 19 Novembre 1934); also in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo II, PCUGM; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 158/322.

With the letter of 6 December 1934 the Secretary of the Oriental Congregation Cardinal Luigi Sincero communicated the supreme decision of the Roman Pontiff to Apostolic Delegate Kierkels, asking him to inform the Syro-Malabar bishops of the pontifical decision.[30] Mar Augustine Kandathil, archbishop of Ernakulam received the decision of Pope Pius XI with maximum deference and immediately communicated the same to his suffragan bishops. The Apostolic Delegate wrote to the Oriental Congregation:

> No sooner had I received your most esteemed official letter no. 290/29 of 6 December (1934) with regard to the Pontifical for the Syro-Malabar rite than I hastened to communicate the content to Msgr. Archbishop of Ernakulam, who in his turn has informed his suffragan bishops about it. Now I am well pleased to assure Your Most Rev. Eminence that the distinguished Prelate has welcomed with the maximum deference the decision of the Holy Father assuring me that "he will be always pleased to follow the instructions of the Holy See, whatever they may be".[31]

Although the Syro-Malabar bishops always clamoured for the approval of a Syriac version of Roman Pontifical for their Church, they accepted the supreme decision of the Roman Pontiff with due submission and respect.

8. The Pontifical Commission for the Revision and Compilation of the Syriac Pontifical (1936-1938)

In accordance with the decision of the Pope, the Congregation for the Oriental Church constituted the commission for the revision and publication of the Chaldean Pontifical with Msgr. Eugene Tisserant as president, Fr. Cyril Korolevskij and Fr. Placid de Meester as liturgists, and Fr. Paul Hindo and Arnold Van Lantschoot as specialists of Syriac language. Msgr. René Graffin,

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[30] Communication of the Decision of the Holy Father to the Syro-Malabar bishops, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo II, PCUGM; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 158-159.

[31] Letter of the Apostolic Delegate to the Oriental Congregation, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo II, PCUGM, no page number; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 160.

resident in Paris, was not called to become a member of the commission, because of his old age and sickness. To Fr. De Meester was also assigned the office of the secretary of the commission with the charge of writing the reports. On 2 May 1936 the Holy Father personally approved the commission as proposed by the Oriental Congregation, expressing his desire that the work be started as soon as possible.[32]

On 15 June 1936 the president of the commission Bishop Tisserant was elevated to the dignity of a cardinal and on 19 June 1936 he was appointed secretary (at that time the prefect was the Pope himself) of the Oriental Congregation. Hence on 15 April 1937 James M. Vosté OP, consultant of the same Congregation and expert of Syriac language was appointed as president.[33]

The commission (27 sessions) examined all the important manuscripts, revised the texts, composed the entire Chaldean Pontifical and concluded its work in 1938. A Latin version of the entire Pontifical was also made to facilitate the examination of theologians, Roman experts and Cardinals unable to read Syriac. The said Latin translation, *Pontificale iuxta Ritum Eccleiae Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum* was printed in four parts: part I– ordinations up to the episcopate inclusive (1937); part II– ordination of patriarch and other minor rites regarding persons (1938); part III– consecration of altar and all other rites concerning things such as the blessing of oils (1938), part IV– monastic rites, preceded by a dissertation on the doctrine of the Syro-Oriental Pontifical (1938).[34]

9. Approval of the Pontifical (1939-1942)

On 3 July 1939 the printed Latin text of the revised Chaldean Pontifical, together with the proposals and resolutions of the

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[32] Cf. *Foglio per l'Udienza del Santo Padre*, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo II, PCUGM.

[33] Letter of Oriental Congregation to James M. Vosté OP, in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo II, PCUGM.

[34] S. Congregazione "pro Ecclesia Orientali", Prot. N. 290/1929, *Pontificale iuxta Ritum Eccleiae Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, partes 1-IV, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1937-1938.

pontifical commission, was submitted to the examination of the plenary assembly of the Oriental Congregation. The Relator, Cardinal Ermenegildo Pellegrinetti in his Report enucleated the history and manner of the work of the commission, criteria for the printing, content of the Pontifical and difficulties with regard to some Nestorian theological expressions. The Cardinal particularly emphasized that the Nestorian doctrinal questions had to be resolved by the assembly.[35]

The plenary assembly of the Congregation for the Oriental Church approved the Pontifical, but asked the commission to clarify some points that gave rise to suspicions of a theological character. The suspicion of the Cardinals about the authenticity of some expressions is understandable before the Second Vatican Council, when the Assyrian Church of the East was considered really "Nestorian". After due clarifications, on 9 July 1939 the resolutions of the assembly were submitted to Pope Pius XII (Pope Pius XI died on 10 February 1939), who in principle approved the Pontifical, but ordered that before the printing the work should be submitted to the examination of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office (at present Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith).[36]

However, according to the longstanding praxis Oriental liturgical books were not submitted to the Holy Office for examination. On 27 January 1940 Cardinal Tisserant obtained an audience with Pope Pius XII and humbly expounded to him that it "would be the first time that the S. Congregation of the Holy Office would intervene as regards the liturgical books of an Oriental rite" and hence it would be contrary to the constant praxis with regard to the publication of Oriental liturgical books. He also presented to the Pope the opinion of the commission that "not the entire work, but only the small doubts of a theological nature be

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[35] Report of Cardinal Pellegrinetti, in ACOC, *Ponenze* dell'Anno 1939, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 170-177/330-336.

[36] Report of the Papal Approval in ACOC, *Ponenze* dell'Anno 1939; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac,* 183-184/342.

subjected" to the Holy Office for its examination.[37] The Pope accepted the proposal and authorized the Cardinal to submit only a few doubtful expressions of theological nature to the Holy Office which, after due clarifications, gave its definite confirmation on 22 May 1942.[38]

10. Printing and Official Publication (1957-1958)

Unexpected set-backs, the Second World War (1939-1945) and the difficulty to find a suitable press for printing the restored Pontifical in Syriac impeded its immediate publication. At last in 1954 the press of the St. Joseph's University in Beirut undertook the printing of the Pontifical in Syriac and completed the work in 1957. The typical edition of the Pontifical in Syriac, entitled *Liber Officiorum Pontificalium secundum usum Ecclesiae sanctae Syrorum Orientalium* was officially published in Rome in 1957 for the use of the Churches of the Syro-Oriental tradition. Thus the Pontifical which the St Thomas Christians used until XVI century was restored.

On the Great Sunday of Resurrection, 8 July 1958 the Congregation for the Oriental Church applied the Pontifical to the Syro-Malabar Church by the publication of *Ordo persolvendi ritus pontificales iuxta usum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis*, which contained also special instructions and rubrics for celebration.[39] The *Ordo* applied the rites of consecration of new Churches, re-consecration of defiled churches, consecration of portable altar and consecration of holy oil, as well as the Ordination rites of lectors *(karoya)*, subdeacons *(heupdiakna)*, deacons *(m'samsana)*, priests, archdeacons, *chorepiscopi*, bishops and metropolitans. The other items of the Pontifical were not immediately relevant for the Syro-

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[37] Written presentation Cardinal Tisserant to the Pope in ACOC, Prot. No. 290/29, *Malabaresi-Liturgia*, Fascicolo III, RSPC, no. 15; *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 196-197/352-354.

[38] For details and documentation, see *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*, 193-203.

[39] Sacra Congregatio pro Eccleisa Orientali, *Ordo persolevendi ritus pontificales iuxta usum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis*, Romae 1958.

Malabar Church, since at that time it was not a major archiepiscopal or patriarchal Church.

11. Malayalam Translation and Implementation of the Pontifical (1958-1959)

After the elapse of several years when the Syriac Pontifical was ready for use, the tendency of employing vernacular in liturgical celebrations was already in vogue and hence there arose the need of translating it into Malayalam. On 22 November 1957 under instruction from the Congregation for the Oriental Church a few copies of the Pontifical were dispatched from Beirut to Mar Joseph Parecattil, Archbishop of Ernakulam (1957-1984) for distribution among the Syro-Malabar bishops. The Congregation sent the Pontifical to Cardinal Parecattil, directing him to translate it in six months time. The Congregation ordered that the new Pontifical be used compulsorily from 1 January 1959, but upon request permission was granted to continue the old system for another year.[40] As Cardinal Parecattil states: "By the end of 1959, the translation was completed and as directed by the Congregation was commissioned for use. The long cherished dream of some of us here was realized".[41] The Pontifical in Malayalam began to be used for priestly ordinations in 1960, although the first episcopal consecration took place only in 1968.[42] However, at that time the entire Pontifical was not translated into Malayalam and introduced into regular use.

12. Modification of the Pontifical and a Set of New Books (1965-2007)

Mar Joseph Parecattil, the Chairman of the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Committee realized that there were defects and repetitions in the Pontifical. Hence attempts were made to reform

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[40] Cf. J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, Ernakulam 1987, 40.

[41] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 40.

[42] The new Pontifical was used for the first time on 24 February 1968 for the episcopal consecration of Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, Bishop of Kottayam.

it. Firstly a new rite for the consecration of churches was compiled. With regard to this Cardinal Parecattil states:

> I got the defects remedied and the prayers shortened. Consecratory rituals were enlarged. According to my directions along these lines, Fr. Abel prepared a prayer book, and published it, titled *Pallikoodasa*. It was revised and published again as *Devalaya Prathista* (dedication of churches). [...] The book has not been formally approved by the bishops' council, but it is being invariably used now and nobody has objected to it.[43]

At the time of the blessing of the Basilica at Ernakulam in 1974 the book was again revised and republished as "Solemn Consecration of Churches" and it was used in the entire Syro-Malabar Church for the consecration of churches. [44] New texts were formulated also for sacred Ordinations. Cardinal Parecattil states:

> [...] the Central Liturgical Committee appointed a sub-committee on 30.3.1967 with Bishop Valloppilly as chairman and Fr. Lucas CMI as convener. It appears that the committee never met. Still due to the over enthusiasm of Fr. Silas C.M.I., two prayer books, 'Order of Granting Minor Orders', 'Order for Ordination of Priests', were published with the note 'Pro-manuscripto'. The two books were scrutinized and published by the Central Liturgical Committee.[45]

However, these books were "tried only in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam and a few other dioceses, even as an experiment".[46] In the course of time these new books began to be used in all the dioceses in the then ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam. For the episcopal consecration, different booklets with modifications were compiled. Evidently these books were not canonically approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority.

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[43] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 44.

[44] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 44.

[45] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 44.

[46] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 45.

13. A Common Pontifical for the Entire Syro-Malabar Church (1996-2007)

On 16 December 1992 the Syro-Malabar Church was granted major archiepiscopal status; the first session (20-25 May 1993) of the Synod itself constituted a synodal commission of three bishops for liturgy.[47] Under the synodal commission the efforts for the reform and renewal of liturgy, also with the aim of producing common liturgical books for the entire Syro-Malabar Church, progressed considerably.

The synod of 3 to 15 November 2003 approved the draft of the rites of Episcopal Ordination and Priestly Ordination and the rites of the Installation of Bishops, Archbishops and Major Archbishop.[48] The synod of 22 August to 3 September 2005 sanctioned the Ordination rites of *Karoya, Heupdiakna* and *M'samsana*.[49] Moreover the text of the blessing of Oil was given to the synodal Fathers so that they might discuss it in their eparchies and give their observations to the liturgical commission.[50] The synod of 9-11 January 2006 approved the rite of blessing of the Holy Oil (Holy Myron).[51]

The Pontifical of the Syro-Malabar Church containing the: Rite of *Karoya, Heupdiakna* and *M'samsana,* Rite of Priestly Ordination, Rite of Episcopal Ordination, Rite of Installation of Bishops/Archbishops, Rite of Installation of Major Archbishop and Rite of Blessing of the Holy Oil, was forwarded to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches on 5 May 2006 for prior review in accordance with canon 657 § 1 of the Eastern Code. On 20 March 2007 the Congregation granted the canonical *Recognitio* and thus the way was paved for the publication of a canonically approved Pontifical for the entire Syro-Malabar Church.

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[47] Cf. *Synodal News*, no. 1 (August 1993) 7.

[48] Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 11, no. 2 (December 2003) 19 & 36-37.

[49] Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 13, nos.1 & 2 (December 2005) 24.

[50] Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 13, nos.1 & 2 (December 2005) 23.

[51] *Synodal News*, vol. 14, nos.1 & 2 (November 2006) 51.

With the decree dated 15 August 2007 Major Archbishop Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil promulgated the new Pontifical, indicating that it would be effective from 14 September 2007 and declaring that "all other texts hitherto in use for administering the above-mentioned Pontifical Rites stand abrogated from the same date".[52] As determined by the Major Archbishop, the new Pontifical came into force on 14 September 2007 and it is invariably used in the entire Syro-Malabar Church, since the bishops themselves who approved the Pontifical are the only celebrants of pontifical ceremonies.

However, one may note that the new Syro-Malabar Pontifical is not complete, since it does not contain all the pontifical rites enshrined in the Syriac typical edition. In the course of time some of the remaining rites were published as separate books: the first and final profession of religious and profession of the members of secular institutes as well as consecration of churches, consecration of portable altar (deppa) and re-dedication of churches (2013).

Conclusion

After using the Roman Pontifical for more than three centuries, because of the strong intervention of Pope Pius XI and the indefatigable efforts of the newly erected 'Congregation for the Oriental Church' the Syro-Oriental or Chaldean Pontifical was again revised and restored for the benefit of Syro-Malabar Church. As in the case of other liturgical books, a section of this Church again deviated from the typical edition promulgated by the Oriental Congregation and produced unapproved liturgical books, thus creating two kinds of pontifical ceremonies. The promulgation of the present common Pontifical will surely contribute to the creation of basic liturgical unity and the enhancement of Eastern heritage in this Church.

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[52] The Decree of promulgation can be found in the beginning of the *Order of Pontifical of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Malayalam), Kochi 2007.

Article Four

RESTORATION AND REFORM OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Introduction

The Liturgy of the Hours, which follows the same division of the liturgical year and calendar and which deepens the liturgical spirit of each season, is inevitably connected with the Eucharistic liturgy. As in other liturgical items, the St Thomas Christians in India followed East Syrian Divine Office from time immemorial. This fact is also evident from the acts and decrees of the Synod of Diamper, as we see below.

1. Liturgy of the Hours and the Synod of Diamper

The Synod of Diamper observed that the common prayer and the breviaries of the St Thomas Christians,

> having been composed by Nestorian heretics, are full of blasphemies, heresies, fables and apocryphal stories, whereby instead of praising God, they are continually blaspheming him in their divine offices.[1]

The Synod found fault especially with the offices of Annunciation-Nativity, which were "little else than pure blasphemy". The Synod judged that, because of the "Nestorian heretical doctrines" and other errors, the prayer books and breviaries of the St Thomas Christians "do well deserve to be burned", "yet there being no other at present in this diocese for the keeping up of divine service and the celebration of religious offices" they could be corrected and used until such time as the Church would be provided with new breviaries from Rome.[2] The manner of correcting breviaries was also indicated:

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[1] Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 15.

[2] Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 15.

> [...] the Synod does order them to be corrected and purged from all their errors and commemorations of heretics and the entire offices for all such, and the offices of Advent and Nativity to be entirely torn out of their breviaries and burnt, entreating the most illustrious Metropolitan to see it done at his next visitation in all the churches of the diocese, commanding all curates in virtue of obedience and upon pain of excommunication to be ipso facto incurred, to produce the said books and all other books [...].[3]

As indicated, during the visit of Menezes after the Synod the breviaries were corrected and in the course of time some items were added from the Roman Breviary, especially for those feasts which were not found in the East Syrian calendar. Although Menezes stated that the breviaries were full of heresies and errors, J. P. M. Van der Ploeg, who rigorously examined some of the ancient Syriac manuscripts, found that the corrections were exceedingly few in number.[4] He did not discover any really objectionable passage in the offices of Annunciation-Nativity.[5]

According to the ancient Malabar custom, many priests and clerics were attached to the same parish, who earnestly recited the divine office in common in the church, in which the other Christian faithful also participated especially during the periods of Annunciation-Nativity, Great Lent, as well as on Sundays and feast days. The priests were obliged to be present for the public recitation of divine office in the church.[6]

The Latin custom of privately reciting the canonical prayers for fulfilling a juridical obligation did not exist among the St

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[3] Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 15.

[4] J. P. M. Van der Ploeg, *The Christians of St. Thomas in South India and Their Syriac Manuscripts*, Bangalore 1983, 76.

[5] J. P. M. Van der Ploeg, *The Christians of St. Thomas in South India and Their Syriac Manuscripts*, 77; cf. also the English translation of the entire propria of the Annunciation-Nativity Season, J. Moolan, *The Period of Annunciation-Nativity in the East Syrian Calendar*, Kottayam 1985, 64-145.

[6] Cf. A. Monserrat, "Información de los christianos de S. Thomé", 519; F. Ros, "*Relação sobre a Serra*", 335; F. Dionysio, "Informação da cristandade de São Thomé que está no Malavar, reino da India Oriental", 140; Letter of M. Nunes, Barreto (1564), *Documenta Indica*, vol. 5 (1957) 416; Letter of Alvaro Penteado (1528), in A. Silva Rego, *Documentação para a historia das missões do Padroado português do Oriente*, vol. 3, 549.

Thomas Christians before the Synod of Diamper. Hence the Synod "does declare that all who are in holy orders are obliged upon pain of mortal sin to recite the whole divine office" and they should fulfil the obligation privately, if they could not go to the Church. Those who had no books could satisfy the obligation by reciting a number of Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father.[7]

Archbishop Menezes corrected the Divine Office of the Malabar Church for provisory use until such time as the said Church would be provided with new breviaries from Rome. However, the Divine Office was never printed in Rome as desired by the Archbishop. Hence the priests continued to recite the Divine Office employing the manuscripts as corrected by the Synod of Diamper with additions from the Roman Breviary for the feasts adopted from the Roman calender.

2. Codification and Official Publication of the Divine Office of the Syro-Oriental Tradition (1938)

Patriarch Mar Iso'yahb III (647-658), the great liturgical reformer of the East Syrian tradition, first arranged the liturgical year in nine periods according to the flow of the history of salvation, centred on the Christ-event. Then he strove to collect all existent manuscripts of the Divine Office and arranged them according to the liturgical year, grouping them into three collections: 1) *Hudra* (cycle), Divine Office for Sundays and movable feast days; 2) *Gazza* (treasury) for fixed or immovable feast days and 3) *Kaskol* for weekdays.[8]

The patriarchal synod of the Chaldean Church met from 7 to 21 June 1853 decided to codify the Syriac manuscripts of the Divine Office, to correct the mistakes if any and print it for daily use. The synodal decision was executed by Patriarch Patros Elias XII (d. 1894), who appointed Mar Abdiso Kayyath (d. 1899)

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[7] Synod of Diamper, session VII, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders*, decree 5.

[8] V. Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, Kottayam 2000, 25; J. Moolan, "The Evolution of the East Syrian Divine Office in the Syro-Malabar Church", *Christian Orient*, vol. XXIX, no. 2 (2008) 70.

metropolitan of Amed (later patriarch) and Fr Paul Bedjan, a renowned Syriac scholar for the task.[9] They examined different manuscripts, corrected mistakes, improved language, removed "doctrinal errors" and finalized the text.

After obtaining the authorization of Propaganda Fide the whole Divine Office was published in three volumes under the title, *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium, id est Chaldaeorum*, Paris 1886-1887.[10] The first volume contained the office for the periods of Annunciation and *Denha*, the second for the periods of Great Fast and Resurrection and the third for the periods of *Sleeha, Eliya-Sliba, Muse* and *Qudas eta* (dedication of the Church). Each volume contained three parts: 1) common prayer for every day; 2) proper part for different occasions and 3) Psalter.

The "Congregation for the Oriental Church" reprinted the same volumes in 1938 with some corrections made by J. M. Voste and E. Rassam. The Congregation published these books, with a preface of Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, the then Secretary, as the official edition of the Liturgy of the Hours of the Chaldean and the Syro-Malabar Churches.[11] In 2002 Congregation for the Oriental Churches reprinted the said Liturgy of the Hours in a single volume.[12]

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[9] V. Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 26.

[10] With regard to the ecclesiastical approval the following information can be found: Imprimatur, Ioannes Card. Simeoni, Praef. S. C. de Propaganda Fide, Romae, die 8 Maii 1886.

[11] About this edition the following information can be found in Latin: "Breviarum hoc, anno 1886 editum de mandato Sacrae Congregationis de Prpaganda Fide, denuo prodit expensis Sacrae Congregationis "Pro Ecclesia Orientali", Romae, in festo Epiphaniae D. N., die 6 Ian. 1938, Eugenus Card. Tisserant, Secret. S. Congr. "Pro Eccl. Or.".

[12] *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium, id est Chaldaeorum*, Romae 2002.

3. The First Printed Text of the East Syrian Divine Office for the Syro-Malabar Church in Syriac (1876)

The codification and printing of the Syriac text of the Chaldean Divine Office in 1886-1887 did not affect the Malabar Church. The priests were still using the seventh century manuscripts as arranged by Patriarch Iso'yahb III with Latin interpolations. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Vicar General of the Catholic St Thomas Christians in the Vicariate of Verapoly from 1861 to 1871, codified the then existing manuscripts in Kerala and abridged them as much as possible, but without losing the essential structure and traits of the Syro-Oriental tradition. This did not obtain the approval of Rome.

Then a new shortened Divine Office of one-week system for the whole year was drafted and got the approval of the Holy See. It was printed and published by the seminary press at Puthenpally in 1876, five years after the death of Chavara, under the supervision of Leonard Mellano, Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly (1868-1886). This was the first printed Liturgy of the Hours of the Catholic St Thomas Christians, which contained practically one week's office to be repeated all through the liturgical year, but with an office for each Sunday. The Syro-Malabar priests used this volume until the appearance of partial Malayalam texts, after the Second Vatican Council.[13]

Saint Chavara also compiled another volume for the feasts. He translated some prayers from the *Breviarium Romanum* and added them to the Syriac original. The feasts were all rearranged according to the Latin calendar, which was followed at that time in Malabar for the Eucharistic celebration. With some corrections and with the permission of the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam it was

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[13] Cf. V. Pathikulangara, "The Chaldeo-Indian Divine Praises and the Recent Instruction of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches", in A. G. Kollamparampil & J. Perumthottam (eds.), *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom*, Changanassery 1997, 253-254; *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 76-77; J. P. M. Van der Ploeg, *The Christians of St. Thomas in South India and Their Syriac Manuscripts*, 81; J. Moolan, "The Evolution of the East Syrian Divine Office in the Syro-Malabar Church", 72-73.

printed and published from Mannanam in 1894; it was used mostly in religious houses of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI).[14]

4. First Attempts for Liturgy of the Hours in Malayalam (1967-1971)

Even before the Second Vatican Council, the 'Congregation for the Oriental Church' asked the Syro-Malabar Bishops to abridge the official *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium, id est Chaldaeorum* (Romae 1938), translate it into Malayalam and publish it for regular use.[15] During the Council the Syro-Malabar Bishops met in Rome and unanimously decided to translate the Liturgy of the Hours into Malayalam as soon as possible.

At the request of Archbishop Joseph Parecattil, Fr. Abel CMI compiled the prayers for the periods of Lent and Resurrection, which were published in 1967 and 1968 respectively.[16] Fr. Lucas CMI prepared the Liturgy of the Hours for the periods of Annunciation-Nativity and Epiphany, which was printed in 1971.[17] This work was released in 1972 with the imprimatur of all bishops. The attempts for producing the prayers for the remaining liturgical seasons failed.[18]

5. Subcommittee for the Preparation of the Liturgy of the Hours (1973-1974)

In August 1973 the Syro-Malabar Bishop's Conference selected chairmen for various future subcommittees for liturgical restoration, among whom Mar Joseph Powathil, the then auxiliary bishop of Changanacherry was appointed for the Liturgy of the

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[14] V. Pathikulangara, "The Chaldeo-Indian Divine Praises and the Recent Instruction", 254; *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 77.

[15] V. Pathikulangara, "The Chaldeo-Indian Divine Praises and the Recent Instruction", 255; *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 77-78.

[16] *Divine Office for the Lenten and Easter Seasons* (Malayalam), 2 vols., Ernakulam 1967-1968.

[17] *Divine Office for the Annunciation-Nativity and Epiphany Seasons* (Malayalam), Ernakulam 1971.

[18] Cf. J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 115.

Hours. The Bishops' Conference held from 21 to 24 August 1974 constituted the subcommittee, selecting from the central liturgical committee, Rev. Frs. Abel CMI, Charles Payngot, Kotamullil (name not found) and James Chavelil as members.[19]

6. The Divine Office of Abel CMI (1975)

Fr. Abel CMI, who was working on the Liturgy of the Hours since 1967, withdrew from the subcommittee appointed by the Bishops' Conference, but privately continued his work. With regard to this, Archbishop Joseph Parecattil stated: "I wanted Fr. Abel to complete the series. As the breviary for priests had raised discussions, Fr. Abel took up the prayer book of the nuns"[20].

Fr. Abel's book was originally intended for religious sisters. When the chairman of the subcommittee for the Liturgy of the Hours wrote to Parecattil on 12 July 1974 demanding that Fr. Abel's work should be blocked, he replied: "[...] Fr. Abel had gone ahead too far for me to dissuade him from the work. As Fr. Abel's book was meant for the nuns, it should not affect the committee's work".[21] Abel's books with the imprimatur of Archbishop Parecattil were published in three volumes in 1974-1975.[22] As Cardinal Parecattil observed, "Gradually not only sisters but priests and the seminarians at Dharmaram and Alwaye started using it".[23] The Preface to the books of Abel states:

> At the time of His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches published the canonical prayer (Bedjan) for those who follow the Chaldean rite in three volumes. Now the prayers of those volumes are published in three books with timely adaptations. In this first book the prayers for the three seasons of Advent, Nativity and *Denha* are included. Psalms

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[19] Cf. J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 89.

[20] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 116.

[21] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 117.

[22] Abel CMI, *Canonical Prayer* (Malayalam), 3 volumes, 1974-1975.

[23] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 116.

> and other scriptural parts are adapted so as to render them suitable for prayer [...].[24]

The books of Abel contain the prayers for one week in each liturgical season, without any special offices for the feasts. These books are still used in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam, in some other dioceses and in the religious houses situated in those places.

7. The Liturgy of the Hours of the Subcommittee (1986)

The work of the subcommittee appointed by the Bishops' Conference proceeded gradually because it had to consult other bishops, central liturgical committee and experts. With regard to this Cardinal Parecattil asserted:

> The subcommittee under Bishop Powathil, constituted by the Bishop's Conference in August 1974 is pursuing the work on canonical prayers along parallel lines. Fr. Abel was a member of this subcommittee at first. But as he realized that no creative help would be forthcoming from the other members he withdrew from it and proceeded on his own. The subcommittee, though unable to complete the work before 15th Aug. 1975 as they were asked, finished the draft for "Sleeha" and "Kaitha" seasons before the end of 1978. They are being used at some centres.[25]

The subcommittee prepared the texts for each liturgical season and sent them for study and consideration to all bishops, members of central liturgical committee and to other experts. In 1982-1983 the whole Liturgy of the Hours was printed in three volumes, which were given for experimental use in few institutions, mainly the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary at Vadavathoor, Kottayam.[26]

The central liturgical committee convened on 11-12 July 1985 discussed the whole draft of the Liturgy of the Hours and proposed amendments. The committee submitted the emended text with its

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[24] English translation is mine. The same preface can be found in the three volumes of Abel, only the indication of the liturgical seasons changes.

[25] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 117.

[26] Cf. V. Pathikulangara, "The Chaldeo-Indian Divine Praises and the Recent Instruction", 255; *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 79.

own suggestions to the Bishops' Conference held on 6-7 November 1985, which finally approved the text and asked the Chairman of the liturgical committee to publish it for use, incorporating the agreed upon corrections of the Conference. The Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malabar Church was published in three volumes in 1986.[27] When it came to the reprint, it was published as one volume. The following preface can be found in these books:

> In August 1973 the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference appointed a subcommittee for preparing the Liturgy of the Hours of the Church in Malayalam. After long studies the subcommittee prepared the draft and submitted it to the central liturgical committee, which in its assembly on 11-12 July 1985, discussed widely on the draft and gave its suggestions. The Bishops' Conference held on 6-7 November 1985 studied the report on the draft emended according to the said proposals and gave some directives. The "Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malabar Church", which was given definitive form according to the said directives, is printed and published for the use of all in accordance with the demand of the same Conference.[28]
>
> Changanacherry, 27 December1986,
>
> Mar Joseph Powathil, Chairman, S.M.B.C. Committee for Divine Office.

Like the Liturgy of the Hours published by Fr. Abel CMI, the text of the SMBC also contains only one week's Divine Office for each liturgical season. The special offices for feast days are not included. Hence there is no specific Malayalam text of the office for all Sundays, particular Fridays, feasts, fasts, commemorations and the Holy Week. The books of SMBC are not used in those dioceses, which follow the Divine Office published by Fr. Abel CMI.

From what we have seen it is evident that the Syro-Malabar Church does not have a common canonically approved book of the

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[27] *The Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church, Liturgy of the Hours* (Malayalam) 3 vols., Trivandrum 1986.

[28] English translation is mine; all rights of these books were reserved to the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference.

Liturgy of the Hours for the entire Church. As we see below, as part of the liturgical reform in progress, endeavours for canonically approved Liturgy of the Hours for the entire Church began in the year 2000.

8. Decision to Improve the 1986 Text of Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference (2000)

The synod of bishops held from 10 to 22 July 2000 discussed at length the issues related to the definitive approval of the experimental text of the Liturgy of the Hours, published by the former Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference.[29] After evaluating the various proposals the synod decided

> To improve the language and hymns of the present text of the Liturgy of the Hours and to give approval to it at the earliest. The Central Liturgical Committee (CLC) is entrusted with the task of preparing and presenting the improved text in the first synod in 2001.[30]

The synod also considered the need for the English and Hindi translations of the Liturgy of the Hours. The unanimous opinion was that an officially approved text both in Hindi and English must be made available as soon as possible since different translations are in use at present in different eparchies.[31] Since it is difficult to compare the prayers of the Malayalam text of the Liturgy of the Hours with their sources due to the scarcity of experts in the Syriac language the synod also agreed to take steps to get translated into English the three volumes of the Liturgy of the Hours edited by Paul Bedjan. The synod entrusted this task to the Commission for Liturgy which in turn would constitute a committee with Fr. Emmanuel Thelly CMI as convener.[32]

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[29] Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 24.

[30] *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 37.

[31] Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 24.

[32] *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 24-25.

9. Revision of the Liturgy of the Hours (2001)

In the synod of 5-16 November 2001 Fr. Antony Nariculam, the then Secretary of the CLC sought clarifications with regard to the mandate given to it, pointing out the difficulties involved in improving the hymns. It was clarified that "the mandate given was to make the necessary corrections and refinements and publish the text as official".[33] After discussions, "Finally the Synod asked the Commission to mark the hymns and prayers in the present experimental text that require language correction and modify them as needed and present the revised text in the next session of the Synod".[34]

10. Special Committee of Three Bishops for Reviewing the Revised Text (2003)

In accordance with the aforementioned mandate received, with the help of Fr. Cherian Kunianthodath CMI, the CLC made improvements in the hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours. The improved text was submitted to the synod of 13-15 November 2003 and after a preliminary evaluation, the synod decided to constitute a special committee to review the improvements made in the prayers and hymns of the text of the Liturgy of the Hours consisting of Bishop George Punnakottil as chairman and Bishops Joseph Perumthottam and Thomas Chakiath as members.[35] They might also seek the services of others if needed. According to the report of the synod the mandate given was as follows:

> The committee is to review the prayers and hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours. The Synod authorized the committee to approve the text after their review. That will be considered as the text approved by

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[33] *Synodal News*, vol. 9, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2001) 20.

[34] *Synodal News*, vol. 9, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2001) 20; cf. also page 131.

[35] *Synodal News*, vol. 11, no. 2 (December 2003) 18; see also decisions in page 36.

> the Synod *ad experimentum* until a final text is prepared and approved.[36]

The synod also decided to request the Commission for Liturgy to speed up the work of preparing the final text.[37]

11. Decision on the Three Forms of Celebrating the Divine Office and the Continuation of Preparation (2004-2018)

The secretary and joint secretary of the Commission for Liturgy reported to the synod of 1-13 November 2004 the progress of the work of the Commission on the Liturgy of the Hours. Based on the suggestions of the CLC, the synod decided:

> To print the proposed Liturgy of the Hours (Ramsa, Lelia and Sapra) in simple, solemn and most solemn forms as one book. At the same time the simple form alone of Ramsa, Lelia and Sapra together in one book may also be printed for those dioceses, which need them because of pastoral reasons. Ramsa, Lelia and Sapra may be printed also as separate books.[38]

Obviously the revision and compilation of the complete Divine Office of the East Syrian tradition is a painstaking and lengthy work. In the meantime, according to the decision of the synod a faithful translation of the psalms was made from the Peshitta Bible and it was approved by the synod for liturgical use in 2007 and was published in 2008.[39] As we have seen, a few years ago the synod decided to translate the three volumes of the Liturgy of the Hours edited by Paul Bedjan into English. Although a translation was made, it has not yet been printed and published.

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[36] *Synodal News*, vol. 11, no. 2 (December 2003) 18; see also decisions in page 36.

[37] *Synodal News*, vol. 11, no. 2 (December 2003) 36; see also the report in page 18.

[38] *Synodal News*, vol. 12, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2004) 42; for details see also the report of the Synod in p. 20 and the report of the Syro-Malabar Commission for Liturgy in p. 100.

[39] For more information, *Synodal News*, vol. 12, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2004) 20-21; *Synodal News*, vol. 15, nos. 1 & 2 (November 2007) 38 & 68; *Synodal News*, vol. 16, nos. 1 & 2 (November 2008) 84-85.

In the meantime (2013-2014) decision was taken to incorporate suitable prayers and hymns from the Divine Office of Fr. Abel CMI in the official text of the Liturgy of the Hours.[40] In the synod of 18-30 August 2014 the secretary of the Commission for Liturgy presented a draft text of the variable prayers of the period of Resurrection and sought some clarifications as regards the procedure to be followed in the compilation of the Liturgy of the Hours.

> During the discussion it was pointed out that the synod has to give the Commission concrete directive regarding the structure of the Liturgy of the Hours. Several Bishops expressed their concerns regarding the quality of the text and its appeal to the priests who mainly use it. Towards the end of the discussion a Committee was formed with the members of the Commission for Liturgy and Archbishop Joseph Perumthottam, Bishop Sebastian Adayanthrath, Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt and Bishop Thomas Chakiath to formulate principles regarding the structure of the Liturgy of the Hours".[41]

In the synod of 5-9 January 2015 the general observations and structure of the Liturgy of the Hours, proposed by this special Committee and the Commission for Liturgy were presented.

After a prolonged discussion, the said synod approved with some minor modifications the general proposals and the structure of the most solemn, solemn and ordinary forms of *Ramsa*, *Lelya* and *Sapra*.[42] The Commission for Liturgy is still continuing the preparation of the official text of Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malabar Church in accordance with the decisions and directives of the synod.

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[40] Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 21, nos. 1-2 (December 2013) 76-77; *Synodal News*, vol. 22, nos. 1-2 (December 2014) 32.

[41] *Synodal News*, vol. 22, nos. 1-2 (December 2014) 67 & 103-104.

[42] *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1-2 (December 2015) 24 & 33.

Article Five

LITURGY FACING THE PEOPLE IN THE WEST AND ITS ADOPTION IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

Introduction

Since the Synod of Diamper in 1599 the Malabar Church closely followed the Latin Church as regards the liturgy and sacramental discipline. Even after the Second Vatican Council the tendency to adopt Latin practices continued in the Syro-Malabar Church and the liturgy facing the people is a good example for this. Since the Syro-Malabar Church adopted the manner of celebrating the *Qurbana* facing the people from the post Vatican II practice of the Latin Church, first of all we consider the origin of the practice and its significance in the Latin Church. Then we proceed to a succinct presentation of the introduction and historical evolution of the same practice in the Syro-Malabar Church.

1. Turning towards the East, the Common Tradition of All the Churches

The history of religions itself demonstrates that the orientation of worship is always in the same direction, namely the leader or priest and the community turning to the east or to the deity. The Hindus pray facing the east or the holy of holies, namely the *Sreekovil*. All the prayers and offerings in the temples and public places of worship in Indian religions are done towards the east or holy of holies, and not towards the people.[1] In fact, turning towards the east in prayer was a general custom in the sun-worship of the ancient world form the Mediterranean region to India. Islam prescribes turning in the direction of Kaaba of Mecca. Jews in the Diaspora prayed towards Jerusalem or more precisely towards the presence of the transcendent God in the Holy of Holies of the

[1] Cf. G. Thadikkatt, *Liturgical Identity of the Mār Tōma Nazrāni Church*, 237-239.

Temple. Even after the destruction of the Temple, the prevailing custom of turning towards Jerusalem for prayer was kept in the liturgy of the synagogue, as an expression of messianic hope.[2] Joseph Ratzinger confirms:

> The rabbi and the people gaze at the 'Ark of the Covenant', and in so doing, they orient themselves toward Jerusalem, turn themselves toward the Holy of Holies in the Temple as the place of God's presence for his people. This remained the case even after the destruction of the Temple. The empty Holy of Holies had already been an expression of hope, and so, too, now is the destroyed Temple, which waits for the return of Shekinah, for its restoration by the Messiah when he comes.[3]

Although the early Christians followed the Jewish forms of worship and synagogue liturgy, instead of turning to the Temple as the place of God' presence, they looked towards the east, the rising sun, a symbol of risen Christ, who will appear there for the final judgement. Turning towards the east in prayer expressing the eschatological hope for the second coming of Christ as the Sun of righteousness thus became a universally accepted principle from the very beginning of Christianity.[4] Turning towards the Lord (priest and the people in the same direction) was the common tradition of all the Christian Churches. Joseph Ratzinger states:

> In the early Church, prayer toward the east was regarded as an apostolic tradition. We cannot date exactly when this turn to the east, the diverting of the gaze from the Temple, took place, but it is certain that it goes back to the earliest times and was always regarded as an essential characteristic of Christian liturgy (and indeed of private prayer).[5]

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[2] U. M. Lang, *Turning towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer*, San Francisco 2004, 35-36.

[3] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco 2000, 66.

[4] Cf. U. M. Lang, *Turning towards the Lord*, 37-88; R. Matheus, "Facing the People of God or Facing God with the People?", in *Christian Orient*, vol. XX, no. 2 (1999) 84-89.

[5] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 68; see also page 75.

The common tradition of the entire Christendom was modified for the first time by the Protestant reformers in the XVI century. For them turning towards people was a sign of the rejection of holy Eucharist as sacrifice and its reduction to a mere banquet. As Robert Matheus affirms, "the abandonment of the eastward position and the adoption of a table in place of an altar signified the rejection of the Eucharist as a sacrifice".[6]

Also because of Protestant influence, the Latin Church, which celebrated the entire Eucharistic liturgy facing the Lord (*versus Dominum seu Orientem*) from apostolic times, recently modified this tradition, but as we see below, not in an absolute manner. The Orthodox Churches of Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, Constantinopolitan and Chaldean traditions still celebrate the Divine Liturgy turning towards the east or the Lord, considering it as an essential part of their liturgical heritage.

With regard to the Eastern tradition the Congregation for the Oriental Churches affirms: "Ever since ancient times, it has been customary in the prayer of the Eastern Churches to prostrate oneself to the ground, turning toward the east; the buildings themselves were constructed such that the altar would face the east".[7] The Eastern Catholic Churches of the aforementioned traditions also generally maintain the tradition of facing the east in liturgical prayers, though with some exceptions. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches, after clarifying that "it is not a question of presiding the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage toward the Kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord", categorically affirms:

> Such practice, threatened in numerous Eastern Catholic Churches by a new and recent Latin influence, is thus of profound value and

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[6] R. Matheus, "Facing the People of God or Facing God with the People?", 85.

[7] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 107.

> should be safeguarded as truly coherent with the Eastern liturgical spirituality.[8]

Now we examine "this new and recent Latin influence", which threatens authentic Eastern traditions in many places.

2. The Second Vatican Council and Liturgy Facing the People in the Latin Church

The Second Vatican Council is often held responsible for the modification of the bi-millennial praxis of liturgy *versus Dominum* in the Latin Church. However, nothing is found in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* or in other documents of Vatican II concerning the Mass facing the people or setting up of new altars. Joseph Ratzinger confirms:

> To the ordinary churchgoer, the two most obvious effects of the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council seem to be the disappearance of Latin and the turning of the altars towards the people. Those who read the relevant texts will be astonished to learn that neither is in fact found in the decrees of the Council [...]. There is nothing in the Council text about turning altars towards the people [...].[9]

The Instruction on Implementing the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, *Inter Oecumenici*,[10] prepared by the *Consilium* established by Pope Paul VI for the implementation and interpretation of the said Constitution and published by the then Sacred Congregation of Rites on 26 September 1964 provided some directives concerning the construction of new altars. Concerning the main altar the Instruction stated:

> The main altar should preferably be freestanding, to permit walking around it and celebration facing the people. Its location in the place

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[8] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 107.

[9] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), "Foreword", in U. M. Lang, *Turning towards the Lord*, 9.

[10] Sacra Congregatio Rituum, Instructio ad exsecutionem constitutionis de sacra liturgia recte ordinandam, *Inter Oecumenici*, *AAS* 56 (1964) 877-900.

> of worship should be truly central so that the attention of the whole congregation naturally focuses there.[11]

The Instruction does not sanction the destruction or restructuring of already existing beautiful altars of high artistic, aesthetic and architectural value, nor obligatorily prescribes Mass facing the people, but permits the construction of altars in eventual new churches separate from the wall so that a celebration facing the people may be possible. This is not directly a legislation about the Mass facing the people, but about the construction of new altars.

The same directive concerning the construction of altars was inserted, in the Post Vatican II Roman Missal published in 1970 with redactional changes:

Altare maius exstruatur a pariete seiunctum, ut facile circumiri et in eo celebratio versus populum peragi possit [...].[12]	The main altar should be built separate from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people [...].

Here also the direct object of the legislation is the manner of constructing new altars and not the Mass facing the people. From the expression "Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people" it is evident that the Mass facing the people is indicated only as a possibility, not as a peremptory juridical obligation. However, in the English text prepared by the International Commission on Liturgy in English, the said directive is rendered in such way that the Mass facing the people appears as obligatory. [13]

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[11] "Praestat ut altare maius exstruatur a pariete seiunctum, ut facile circumiri et in eo celebratio versus populum peragi possit; in sacra autem aede eum occupet locum, ut revera centrum sit quo totius congregationis fidelium attentio sponte convertatur". Sacra Congregatio Rituum, *Inter Oecumenici*, no. 91, *AAS* 56 (1964) 898.

[12] *Missale Romanum,* ex decreto sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum, auctoriatate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum, editio typica, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1970, *Institutio generalis*, no. 262.

[13] "In every church there should ordinarily be a fixed, dedicated altar, which should be freestanding to allow the ministers to walk around it easily and

The third typical edition of the post Vatican II *Roman Missal*, approved by Pope John Paul II on 10 April 2000, was published in 2002.[14] The revised General Instruction of this Roman Missal, containing 399 articles or numbers, was published separately in 2000 for study purposes. In spite of discussions and disputes, the document does not contain a section or an article on the Mass facing the people; however the directive about the construction of altar is maintained as before with slight changes. We cite the text as found in the typical edition of the Missal published in 2002.

Altare exstruatur a pariete seiunctum, ut facile circumiri et in eo celebratio versus populum peragi possit, quod expedit ubicumque possibile sit [...].[15]	The altar should be built separate from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible [...].

From the phrase "Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people" it is evident that the Mass facing the people is not made mandatory and both forms of celebration are permitted. However with respect to the previous directive, the phrase "which is desirable wherever possible" is added. This is simply the recognition of the praxis in vogue after Vatican II: in the universal Latin Church the Mass has been and is celebrated facing the people only wherever possible. However, this newly added expression provoked some misinterpretations immediately after the publication of the General Instruction in 2000. Hence the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments clarified the significance of the added phrase in a response to Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, dated 25 September 2000:

Mass to be celebrated facing the people [...]". General Instruction, no. 262 as in *The Roman Missal, The Sacramentary*, New York 1985, 44*.

[14] *Missale Romanum,* ex decreto sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum, auctoriatate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum, Ioannis Pauli PP. II cura recognitum, Editio Typica Tertia, Typis Vaticanis 2002.

[15] *Missale Romanum* (2002), *Institutio Generalis*, no. 299.

> In the first place, it is to be borne in mind that the word *expedit* does not constitute an obligation, but a suggestion that refers to the construction of the altar *a pariete seiunctum* (separate from the altar) and to the celebration *versus populum* (towards the people) [...].
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> However, whatever may be the position of the celebrating priest, it is clear that the eucharistic sacrifice is offered to the one and triune God and that the principal, eternal and high priest is Jesus Christ, who acts through the ministry of the priest who visibly presides as his instrument [...]. The physical position, especially with respect to the communication among the various members of the assembly, must be distinguished from the interior spiritual orientation of all. It would be a grave error to imagine that the principal orientation of the sacrificial act is towards the community. If the priest celebrates *versus populum*, which is legitimate and often advisable, his spiritual attitude ought always to be *versus Deum per Iesum Christum* (towards God through Jesus Christ) as representative of the entire Church. The Church as well, which takes concrete form in the assembly which participates, is entirely turned *versus Deum* (towards God) as its first spiritual movement.[16]

Since the dispute over the orientation of the celebrant during the eucharistic liturgy resumed after the diffusion of the General Instruction in 2000 continued, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published an editorial in its official organ called *Notitiae*, confirming the position of the Latin Church concerning the question.[17] The editorial admits that the arrangement of the altar in such a way that the celebrant and the faithful turn to the Orient is a splendid application of the eschatological character of the Eucharist. However it goes on to state that, since the application of this symbolism has gradually been changed in the West, it did not

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[16] Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, "Respons ad questiones de nuova Institutione Generali Missalis" in *Communicationes* 32 (2000) 171-172; English translation as found in U. M. Lang, *Turning towards the Lord*, 26-27.

[17] Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, "Pregare 'ad Orientem versus'", in *Notitiae* 322, vol. 29 (1993) 245-249.

constitute an intangible element of liturgy.[18] Towards the end of the editorial, taking into consideration the present practice of the Latin Church and the numerous questions concerning the theme, the Congregation provides five orientation-points, of which we reproduce here 2-4, since they are relevant for our study.

> 2. The orientation of the altar *versus populum* requires, with greater rigour, a correct use of the different places of the presbytery: seat, ambo and altar, so also a correct positioning of the persons who preside over and serve in it. If the altar is converted to a pedestal for everything that serves to celebrate the Eucharist or a substitute of the seat for the first part of the celebration, or a place from which the priest directs – also in the technical sense – the altar will symbolically lose its identity of the central place of the Eucharist, table of mystery, point of encounter between God and human beings for the sacrifice of the new and eternal alliance.
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> 3. The arrangement of the altar *versus populum* is certainly a desideratum of the current liturgical legislation. It is not, however, an absolute value to be held above all others. Cases must be considered in which the sanctuary does not allow for the placing of an altar facing the people or in which it would not be possible to maintain the existing altar with its ornamentation intact and at the same time install a forward facing altar that could be seen as the principal altar. In such cases it is more faithful to the nature of the liturgy to celebrate at the existing altar, back to the people, than to maintain two altars in the same sanctuary. The principle of there being only one altar is theologically more important than the practice of celebration facing the people.
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> 4. It is fitting to explain clearly that the expression 'to celebrate facing the people' has no theological sense but is only a topographical concept. Every celebration of the Eucharist is 'to the praise and glory of His Name, for our good, and that of all His holy Church'. Theologically, therefore, the Mass is always facing God and facing the people. In the form of celebration one must be careful to avoid confounding theology and topography, especially when the priest is at the altar. It is only in the dialogues from the

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[18] Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, "Pregare 'ad Orientem versus'", 246-247. Since it is changed, it is not an intangible element, seems to be a dangerous argument. For example, it is not possible to affirm that since the practice of divorce is much diffused among the Christians in the West, indissolubility of marriage is a tangible doctrine.

> altar that the priest speaks to the people. All the rest is prayer to the Father, through the mediation of Christ in the Holy Spirit. This theology must be visible.[19]

After the Second Vatican Council the Mass facing people became a general practice in the Latin Church and hence at present it is not possible to modify it, although Mass facing the Lord has never been abolished, but as we see below, positively permitted. Hence now it is only possible to give a theological interpretation: even if the priest turns to the people, every Mass is facing the Lord. However, if the topographical position and the theological sense coincide, this would be more meaningful, since human beings comprehend theological significance, through signs, symbols and acts.

The Congregation for Divine Worship is obviously in a dilemmatic position: on the one hand it cannot deny the legitimacy and appropriateness of the Mass facing the east or the Lord, which was regularly and universally practised from apostolic times by 260 Roman Pontiffs, innumerable martyrs and saints, several thousands of bishops and priests for about two millennia, on the other hand it has to uphold the post conciliar practice of Mass facing the people. Hence it makes recourse to the distinction between topography and theology, affirming that although the celebrant faces the people, theologically every Mass is facing the Lord.

Although, theoretically this can be affirmed, practically when the priest celebrates facing the people they look each other and create a closed circle, at times without any opening to the Lord, who is often forgotten or relegated to a subordinated position. Joseph Ratzinger rightly affirms:

> Now the priest - the 'presider', as they now prefer to call him - becomes the real point of reference for the whole liturgy. Everything depends on him. We have to see him, to respond to him, to be involved in what he is doing. His creativity sustains the whole thing. [...] Less and less is God in the picture. More and more important is what is done by human beings who meet here and do

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[19] Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, "Pregare 'ad Orientem versus'", 248-249.

> not like to subject themselves to a 'pre-determined pattern'. The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is closed in on itself. The common turning toward the east was not a 'celebration toward the wall'; it did not mean that the priest 'had his back to the people': the priest himself was not regarded as so important. For just as the congregation in the synagogue looked together toward Jerusalem, so in the Christian liturgy the congregation looked together 'toward the Lord'.[20]

In the Mass facing the people, the celebrant becomes a performer or an actor, who substitutes Christ, instead of being his instrument. Priests and people are not angels, but fragile human beings. Hence, instead of concentrating on the Lord, people may watch the priest and his performance: his beauty, hair style, gestures, body language, facial expressions, manner of signing hymns and reciting prayers, movements, sweat and wiping in hot seasons and his overall behaviour. The priest also can see his people, men and women, under all aspects described above. Hence, instead of looking together to the Lord in the same direction, the celebrant and the congregation look each other, creating a closed circle.

After evaluating different aspects of the question, Joseph Ratzinger makes a distinction between the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist and underlines the necessity to celebrate the latter towards the Lord. He categorically affirms:

> It was also important clearly to distinguish the place for the Liturgy of the Word from the place for the properly Eucharistic liturgy. For the Liturgy of the Word is about speaking and responding, and so face-to-face exchange between proclaimer and hearer does make sense. [...] On the other hand, a common turning to the east during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of something accidental, but what is essential. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialogue but of common worship, of setting off toward the One who is to come. What corresponds with the

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[20] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 80; cf. also, *Feast of Faith*, San Francisco 1986, 142.

> reality of what is happening is not the closed circle but the common movement forward, expressed in a common direction of prayer.[21]

At present the form proposed by the author is also really practised in the Latin Church. One can find different forms of celebration: the entire Mass facing the people, the liturgy of the Word facing the people, while the Eucharistic prayer or canon turning to the Lord and finally even the entire Mass facing the Lord. In many ancient churches, sanctuaries and monasteries all over the world either of the last two forms are followed. Even in the four major basilicas in Rome every day one can find liturgy facing the Lord at all side altars. Perhaps in the Indian Latin Church, the practice became extinct, since ancient sanctuaries and monasteries do not exist or because even ancient churches of artistic and architectonical value are also easily destroyed and new ones are constructed. In any case it is absolutely false to propagate that the Liturgy facing the Lord has been abolished in the Latin Church.

2.1. The Tridentine Missal of Pope St Pius V and the Continuation of the Mass Facing the Lord in the Latin Church

Even after the promulgation and implementation of the post Vatican II Missal in 1970 official permission was granted to those who so desired to celebrate Mass according to the Missal of Pius V, using the last edition published in 1962 with the approval of Pope John XXIII and used in the entire Latin Church until 1970.[22] It goes without saying that, according to the said Missal the entire Mass is celebrated turning towards the Lord.

Taking into consideration the great attachment and affection of the faithful of some regions to the previous Mass, Pope John Paul II, through the letter of 3 October 1984, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship, granted faculty to the diocesan

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[21] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 81; for the same proposal, see also U. M. Lang, *Turning towards* the Lord, 122.

[22] *Missale Romanum*, ex decreto ss. Concilii Tridentini restitutum, auctoritate S. Pii PP.V promulgatum, B. Joannis PP. XXIII cura recognitum, Romae 1962.

bishops of permitting priests and faithful upon request to use the Roman Missal published in 1962 by Saint John XXIII.[23] Again on 2 July 1988, John Paul II, with the Motu Proprio *Ecclesia Dei*, instituted a commission in Rome for facilitating the full ecclesial communion of those who followed Archbishop Lefebvre.[24] In the document the Pope exhorted bishops to make broad and generous use of the faculty to celebrate the previous Mass:

> Moreover, respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of all those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition by a wide and generous application of the directives already issued some time ago by the Apostolic See for the use of the Roman Missal according to the typical edition of 1962.[25]

Hence the entire Mass facing the Lord according to the previous Missal has been further extended and widely diffused.

With the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* of 7 July 2007 on the use of the Roman Liturgy prior to the reform of 1970 Pope Benedict XVI further liberalized and universalized the use of the Missal of Pius V, mitigating the conditions in the previous two documents.[26] We cite here only the first article:

> The Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the *lex orandi* (rule of prayer) of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. The Roman Missal promulgated by Saint Pius V and revised by Blessed John XXIII is nonetheless to be considered an extraordinary expression of the same *lex orandi* of the Church and duly honoured for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church's *lex orandi* will in no way lead to a division in the Church's *lex credendi* (rule of faith); for they are two usages of the one Roman rite.
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> It is therefore permitted to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass following the typical edition of the Roman Missal, which was

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[23] Congregatio pro Cultu Divino, *Epistula, De usu Missalis Romanis iuxta editionem typicam anni MCMLXII*, *AAS* 76 (1984) 1088-1089.

[24] John Paul II, Motu Proprio *Ecclesia Dei*, *AAS* 80 (1988) 1495-1498.

[25] John Paul II, Motu Proprio *Ecclesia Dei*, *AAS* 80 (1988) 1498.

[26] Benedict XVI, Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, *AAS* 99 (2007) 777-781.

> promulgated by Blessed John XXIII in 1962 and never abrogated, as an extraordinary form of the Church's Liturgy [...].[27]

According to the apostolic letter, in Masses celebrated without a congregation, any Catholic priest of the Latin rite, whether secular or regular, can freely use either of the Roman Missals; there are some restrictions only for the community-celebration.

Obviously according to the Missal of Pius V the entire Mass is celebrated facing the Lord (or *versus Orientem*). Even in the post Vatican Second Roman Missal one cannot find any directive, rubric or norm which prohibits Mass facing the Lord, nor any prescription which categorically obliges the liturgy facing the people. The Catholic Church prefers liturgy towards the Lord, rather than destroying ancient altars, sanctuaries and invaluable artistic treasures.

2. 2. Mass Facing the People and the Position of the Tabernacle

The Church of the first millennium knew nothing of tabernacles. The tabernacle as sacred tent, as place of the Shekinah, the presence of the living Lord, developed only in the second millennium, especially in the middle ages, when the permanent presence of Christ in the consecrated Host emerged with greater clarity.[28] Obviously the tabernacle with the Eucharist was situated at the centre of the altar.

As we have seen, from apostolic times until Vatican II the entire Eucharistic liturgy was celebrated facing the Lord or the east and hence there was no difficulty for the preservation of the Eucharist at the central place. When the liturgy facing the people started, there emerged the problem of turning the back of the celebrant-performer to the Eucharistic Lord, which appeared to be awkward and disrespectful. If a priest truly believes in the real presence of the Lord in the tabernacle, it is difficult to turn his back

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[27] Benedict XVI, Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, *AAS* 99 (2007) 779. Pope John XIII, who was blessed at the time of the promulgation of this document, was canonized on 27 April 2014.

[28] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 85 & 88-90.

to Him, but naturally he will turn to Him with an attitude of adoration and glorification. Once the liturgy facing the people began, in order to avoid the embarrassment and shame of turning the back of the celebrant to the Lord, there originated the tendency to remove the Lord from the centre, placing the tabernacle at the side or in another suitable place. This should be considered better than standing in front of the tabernacle facing the people. Hence the already cited Instruction *Inter Oecumenici* of 1964 provided the following directive:

> The Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid and secure tabernacle, placed in the middle of the main altar or on a minor, but truly worthy altar, or, in accord with lawful custom and in particular cases approved by the local Ordinary, also in another, special, and properly adorned part of the church.
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> It is lawful to celebrate Mass facing the people even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle.[29]

According to the instruction it is no more obligatory to place the tabernacle at the middle of the main altar, but it can be settled on a minor altar or in another part of the church. It seems that at the initial stage of Mass facing the people there was even doubt about the legitimacy of the celebration turning the back of the celebrant to the Eucharistic Lord in the tabernacle. Hence, in order to avoid the embarrassment of such celebrants the Instruction explicitly confirmed the legitimacy of celebration "even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle". However, with the passage of time even the celebrant standing just in front of the tabernacle facing the people became customary and the awareness of doing something disrespectful to the Lord gradually disappeared.

Hence the 1970 Roman Missal dropped the phrase on the legitimacy of the Mass facing the people in front of the tabernacle and modified the directive as follows:

> Every encouragement should be given to the practice of eucharistic reservation in a chapel suited to the faithful's private adoration and prayer. If this is impossible because of the structure of the church,

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[29] Sacra Congregatio Rituum, *Inter Oecumenici*, no. 95, *AAS* 56 (1964) 898.

> the sacrament should be reserved at an altar or elsewhere, in keeping with local custom, and in a part of the church that is worthy and properly adorned.[30]

The third typical edition of 2002 substantially maintained the same norm: "In accordance with the structure of each church and legitimate local customs, the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer".[31] However, in the post synodal apostolic exhortation of 2007 Pope Benedict XVI seems to reaffirm the central place of tabernacle:

> [...] The correct positioning of the tabernacle contributes to the recognition of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, the place where the eucharistic species are reserved, marked by a sanctuary lamp, should be readily visible to everyone entering the church. It is therefore necessary to take into account the building's architecture: in churches which do not have a Blessed Sacrament chapel, and where the high altar with its tabernacle is still in place, it is appropriate to continue to use this structure for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist, taking care not to place the celebrant's chair in front of it. In new churches, it is good to position the Blessed Sacrament chapel close to the sanctuary; where this is not possible, it is preferable to locate the tabernacle in the sanctuary, in a sufficiently elevated place, at the centre of the apse area, or in another place where it will be equally conspicuous. Attention to these considerations will lend dignity to the tabernacle, which must always be cared for, also from an artistic standpoint [...].[32]

In any case, according to the directives of the post conciliar Roman Missal, at present generally in Latin churches the Eucharist is preserved at a side altar or in a small chapel or in another suitable place. Thus the embarrassing situation of celebrating just in front of the tabernacle turning the back to the Lord is avoided. However in small churches and chapels the Eucharist is preserved

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[30] *Missale Romanum* (1970), *Istitutio Generalis*, no. 276.

[31] *Missale Romanum* (2002), *Istitutio Generalis*, no. 314.

[32] Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Vatican City 2007, no. 69.

at the centre and the priest celebrates just in front of the Lord turning to the people, seemingly contradicting the doctrine of real presence or ignoring it.

3. Liturgy Facing the People in the Syro-Malabar Church

From apostolic times until the practice of the liturgy facing the people became prevalent in the Latin Church the St Thomas Christians in India always celebrated liturgy facing the east or towards the Lord. According to the common tradition of the Western and Eastern Churches and the practice of the St Thomas Christians from the apostolic period, also the 1960-1962 restored Syro-Malabar Missal prescribed the celebration of the entire Eucharistic liturgy facing the east (or *versus Deum*).[33] The celebrant turned to the people only for greetings, blessings, prayer requests and the proclamation of the Gospel.

After the Second Vatican Council, without any authorization or permission from the competent authority, Archbishop Joseph Parecattil began to celebrate the *Qurbana* facing the people. Gradually the practice was introduced in the entire archdiocese of Ernakulam. Then this new manner of celebration spread to neighbouring dioceses as well. However, Mar Sebastian Valloppilly, Bishop of Tellicherry, by order No. 5/65 dated 15 July 1965 prohibited offering the Mass facing the people.[34] Mar George Alapatt, Bishop of Trichur, also did the same; on 10 May 1967 he ordered: "There is no permission for the celebrant to face the people while offering the Mass".[35]

However, in the course of time gradually the practice was introduced in both of these dioceses, also because of the great influence of Archbishop Parecattil, who at that time acted as the "head" of the Syro-Malabar Church and permanent president of the bishops' conference and liturgical committee. According to Parecattil, "two dioceses alone are 'backward looking' even now,

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[33] *The Order of Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Alwaye 1962.

[34] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 99.

[35] As cited in J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 99.

both in the literal and ceremonial sense".[36] One may note that this very fundamental change concerning orientation of the celebrant during the *Qurbana* was introduced without any authorization or approval of the Apostolic See, the only competent authority for this at that time. At present nowhere in the world Mass facing the east or the Lord is so stigmatised and chastised as in some dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church.

3.1. Missal of 1968 and the Liturgy Facing the People

The 1962 Missal promulgated by the Oriental Congregation with papal approval was modified mainly according to the ideas of Archbishop Joseph Parecattil and the experimental Missal of 1968 was published.[37] In the letter of Archbishop Parecattil requesting approval for the 1968 Missal and in the attached notes on "Some Changes in the Rubrics of the Mass",[38] he did not even indicate this fundamental change regarding the orientation of the celebrant during the *Qurbana*, which would torment the Syro-Malabar Church for more than half a century. The text submitted to the Oriental Congregation only in Malayalam language contained the norm permitting only the liturgy of the Word facing the people: "The first part of the *Qurbana* (liturgy of the Word) may be said facing the people".[39]

However, the Congregation was unaware of this change, since the translation of the text was not submitted, according to the regulations of that time for the approval of liturgical books. It seems that for reasons unknown the Cardinal Prefect was

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[36] J. Parecattil, *Syro-Malabar Liturgy as I See It*, 99. The two dioceses mentioned by Parecattil may be Changanacherry and Palai.

[37] *The Order of Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Alwaye 1968; for details and documentation, see P. Pallath, *Restoration and Reform of Syro-Malabar Missal*, 303-352.

[38] Letter of Parecattil to the Prefect of Oriental Congregation, in Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Prot. No. 955/65, Liturgia Malabaresi: stato dei libri liturgici malabaresi, Riforma, fascicolo I; P. Pallath, *Restoration and Reform of Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 331-336.

[39] *The Order of Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church* (1968), General Norms, no. 5.

determined to grant the approval without examining the text and without consulting any expert as the praxis and norms of the Congregation required; hence the Syro-Malabar bishops were not even asked to submit a translation of the Malayalam text. It is noteworthy that even in the 1968 Missal permission was not given at all for celebrating the entire *Qurbana* facing the people.

After the implementation of the 1968 Missal, two kinds of celebration existed in the Syro-Malabar Church: Archbishop Parecattil and his followers celebrated the entire liturgy facing the people as in the Latin Church; in other dioceses the directive of the 1968 Missal was followed and hence the liturgy of the Word was celebrated facing the people, while for the liturgy of the Eucharist the celebrant turned to the east or to the Lord.

Following the publication of the 1968 Missal liturgical anarchy and indiscipline began to reign in the Syro-Malabar Church. Even different unauthorized and unapproved missals and completely new Indian made ahaphoras circulated. From 1980 the Congregation for the Oriental Churches strenuously endeavoured to terminate all experimentation and to lead the Church back to the approved texts.

3.2. Intervention of the Apostolic See and Re-establishment of the Mass Facing the East

In this section we also briefly consider the history of the restoration and reform of Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* from 1980, but only in so far as it is necessary to understand the evolution of liturgy facing the people. As already indicated, since 1980 the Congregation for the Oriental Churches strived to lead the Syro-Malabar Church back to the approved Missal of 1962. On 12 August 1980 a detailed report about the state of liturgical reform in the Syro-Malabar Church was sent to all the hierarchs of the Syro-Malabar Church.[40] In this report, after providing a brief history of

[40] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Report on the State of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church*, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy* (compiled and published by Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India), Kottayam 1995, 1-35.

the entire liturgical restoration and reform in the Syro-Malabar Church (1934-1980), the Congregation enucleated the fundamental doctrinal principles for an authentic liturgical reform, pointed out the doctrinal and liturgical errors in the unapproved Indian Masses used for liturgical celebration at that time and provided directives and guiding principles. The Congregation also indicated that "from the text the use of which was permitted *ad experimentum* in 1968, return be made - at least gradually, with pastoral prudence and with adequate and appropriate catechesis - to the restored Malabar liturgy of 1962".[41] This means also a return to the liturgy facing the east, as prescribed by the 1962 Missal.

On the occasion of the *Ad limina* visit of the Syro-Malabar bishops, from 26 to 30 August 1980 a conference was held at the Oriental Congregation for an open discussion on the liturgical reform on the basis of the aforementioned Report. In the inaugural address Cardinal Wladyslaw Rubin urged the Syro-Malabar bishops "to further, with united and concerted effort, the work of producing agreed and definitive texts of the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Divine Office and the *Rituale*, and to forward the texts so prepared to the Sacred Congregation".[42] In the concluding speech of 30 August 1980 the Cardinal reiterated the basic principles of a sound liturgical reform in accordance with the Second Vatican Council and ordered that the Commission in Kerala working at the reform of the Missal "is to terminate the elaboration of the text within the next Christmas (1980), - this is as far as Eucharistic Liturgy is concerned".[43]

Pressed by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, on 3 October 1981 Archbishop Joseph Parecattil submitted to the Congregation for approval of the *Order of the Holy Mass (Qurbana) of the Syro-Malabar Church*, finalized by the Central Liturgical Committee and approved by the Bishop's Conference on

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[41] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Report on the State of Liturgical Reform*, concluding part, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 35.

[42] Wladyslaw Rubin, speech delivered to the Syro-Malabar bishops on 26 August 1980, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 42.

[43] Wladyslaw Rubin, speech delivered to the Syro-Malabar bishops on 30 August 1980, *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 54.

the basis of majority vote. The Congregation set up a special commission of highly qualified experts for the examination of the text and on the basis of their study, formulated its own observations, which were sent to Archbishop Parecattil and to all the Syro-Malabar bishops.[44] The bishops were asked to amend the proposed order of *Qurbana* according to the observations and to formulate a definitive text, "of which it is desired that a copy in Malayalam be sent, together with its English version to this Sacred Congregation by September 15, 1983. It is necessary to impose this time-limit in order to bring to an end a period of uncertainty and arbitrary experimentation that has had deleterious effects on Church life and Catechesis".[45] In the Observations, with regard to the orientation of the celebrant during the *Qurbana* the Congregation prescribed that the "traditional posture facing east is not to be abandoned for another westernization, the *versus populum* position".[46]

By this time the Syro-Malabar bishops were also divided into two main blocs due to the disputes on the Eastern heritage and liturgical identity of the Syro-Malabar Church, mainly on the question of the direction of the celebrant during Divine Liturgy: the first group headed by the archbishop of Ernakulam desired to continue the practice of the entire Mass facing the people, while the second group under the leadership of the archbishop of Changanacherry favoured the liturgy facing the east. It is not possible to comprehend the liturgical problems in the Syro-Malabar Church without frequent reference to these two blocs. However, in order to avoid mentioning the names of persons and dioceses we refer to them, respectively as Group I and Group II. Generally Group I desired to maintain the modifications made in

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[44] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Observations on: "The Order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-Malabar Church 1981"* (1 March 1983, Prot. N. 955/65), in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 60-88.

[45] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, Letter to Cardinal Joseph Parecattil dated 1 March 1983, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 59.

[46] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Observations on: "The Order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-Malabar Church 1981"*, 53a; in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 78.

the 1968 experimental text, while Group II was ready to return to the 1962 approved text, as required by the Oriental Congregation.

In these circumstances, the Syro-Malabar bishops could not produce a definitive text of the Order of *Qurbana*, as desired by the Congregation. Hence, in response to the aforementioned Observations, both groups (I and II) presented to the Congregation two parallel documents, which "reflected conspicuously the divergency of opinion" among the bishops on the liturgical life of the Church. The Congregation proceeded to a thorough re-examination of the entire question, taking into due account the various views expressed by the bishops, through its specially appointed liturgical Commission and then through an ad hoc Commission. On the basis of such studies the Congregation formulated its Final Judgement concerning the Order of Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*, which was sent to all the bishops on 24 July 1985.[47] Archbishop Antony Padiyara, the then President of the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference, was asked to insert the suggestions and rectifications proposed by the Congregation both in the *Observations* and in the *Final Judgement* into the Order of *Qurbana* and to submit the definitive text for approval with the least possible delay.[48]

Some bishops (Group I), who were already accustomed to celebrate the whole *Qurbana versus populum* continuously insisted that they should be permitted to do the same also in the future. After considering all relevant aspects, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches formulated its definitive decision on the issue. In the *Final Judgment* it is stated:

> On the difficult question of celebrating the entire Eucharist *versus populum*, rather than preserving the traditional distinction between the position of the priest during the Liturgy of the Word and during the anaphora, when he stood at the head of the people, facing in the

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[47] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Final Judgement of the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches concerning the Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 24 July 1985, Prot. N. 955/65, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 96-114.

[48] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, Letter to Mar Antony Padiyara dated 24 July 1985, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 95.

same direction as the congregation he was leading in prayer, the S. Congregation has the following to say:

a) The introduction of the mass *versus populum* was done without any approval from the Holy See.

b) The tradition in this matter remains the ideal and clearly represents the will of the Holy See in this matter.

The Eucharist celebrated *versus populum* certainly runs counter to the basic approach to worship in any Eastern tradition worth the name.

c) The celebration, therefore, is not to be *versus populum* but in conformity with the normal way of standing at the altar in the Oriental tradition.

Care must be taken:

- to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word among the people, as was done in the more ancient tradition.

- to see to it that every cathedral and parish church is eventually provided with *bema*, constructed in the middle of the central nave and regularly put to use.

d) The *versus populum* position may be tolerated, in parishes where it has already been introduced, provisionally and for as brief a time as is reasonably possible, while keeping the fact in mind that all permissions and dispensations of whatever kind given during the experimental period are revoked.[49]

The Congregation officially stated what we have already seen above: "The introduction of the mass *versus populum* was done without any approval from the Holy See". It again confirmed the authentic tradition of the Church, namely the Eucharistic liturgy facing the east, but provisionally tolerated the *versus populum* position only in parishes where it was already introduced. The mind of the Congregation is that although the liturgy of the Word facing the people can be tolerated, the Anaphora should be celebrated turning to the east, namely the celebrant and the people in the same direction. Even with regard to the liturgy of the Word the Congregation preferred the ancient tradition of celebrating it

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[49] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibu, *Final Judgement*, no. 40; in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 111-112.

among the people on a *bema*, in accordance with the ancient East Syrian tradition.

As desired by the Oriental Congregation, the text was amended by the liturgical Committee and finalized by the Bishop's Subcommittee. The Bishops' Conference, held on 8 November 1985 ratified the definitive text of the Order of *Raza*.[50] Then the text was sent to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which approved it with the decree dated 19 December 1985. As stated in the same decree the Missal came into force on 8 February 1986 when Pope John Paul II used it for the first time on the occasion of the beatification of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Alphonsa Muttathupadathu in Kottayam.[51] According to the position of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches the 1986 Missal envisaged the entire liturgy facing the east, namely the celebrant and the community turning to the same direction. Rubrics of the Missal precisely indicate, when the celebrant turns to the people, namely for blessings, greetings, Gospel-proclamation and prayer requests.

Group I maintained that the Holy See approved only the most solemn form of the *Qurbana*, called *Raza* and not the simple and solemn forms. Hence they continued to celebrate the *Qurbana* according to the experimental Missal 1968, obviously the entire *Qurbana* facing the people. They never celebrated *Raza* using the 1986 Missal. Group II, who until then celebrated the liturgy of the Word facing the people and the anaphora facing the east, implemented the 1986 Missal and began to celebrate the entire Mass facing the east, in accordance with the rubrics and directives. However, one or two dioceses continued to celebrate according to the 1968 Missal: liturgy of the Word facing the people and liturgy of the Eucharist facing the east (they will be further indicated as Group III). Thus three modes of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* originated in the Syro-Malabar Church.

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50 Cf. T. Mannooramparampil, *The Historical Background of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, Kottayam 1986, 221.

51 *Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference), Trivandrum 1986; decree in Latin and Malayalam in pages V-VIII; English translation in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 117-118.

3.3. Missal of 1989 and Relaxation of the Directive on the Mass Facing the East

After the promulgation and implementation of 1986 Missal, Group I endeavoured to obtain modifications, concessions and permissions, especially the faculty to continue the entire Mass facing the people. In fact "a large number of observations, suggestions and petitions" poured into the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.[52] In dialogue with the bishops, the Congregation carefully studied all the petitions and observations and "formulated a 'via media' with the intent of putting together the spirit and the principles of liturgical reform on the one hand, and the pastoral needs on the other".[53]

Thus on 5 May 1988 the Congregation issued the *Directives on the Order of Syro-Malabar Qurbana in Solemn and Simple Forms*.[54] However, it was reaffirmed that "the Order for the *Raza*, prepared after long and difficult study, approved by the Congregation, and inaugurated by the Holy Father, remains the basis of the Syro-Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy, according to the texts, norms and rubrics contained therein".[55] Moreover, the Congregation ratified the basic principle that, "As is traditional in the official liturgical books of all rites there should be one single altar Missal for all the forms of the *Qurbana* (*Raza*, Solemn and Simple), containing the full text of the liturgy and all rubrics".[56] According to the rubrics and instructions of the *Raza* text, the entire *Qurbana* is celebrated facing the east or altar. The *Taksa*

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[52] Cf. Letter of Cardinal D. Simon Lourdsamy (5 May 1958) to all the local hierarchs of the Syro-Malabar Church, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 122.

[53] Letter of Cardinal D. Simon Lourdsamy (5 May 1958), in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 123.

[54] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Directives on the Order of Syro-Malabar Qurbana in Solemn and Simple Forms*, 5 May 1988, Prot. N. 955/65, no. 64, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 126-138.

[55] Letter of Cardinal D. Simon Lourdsamy (5 May 1958), in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 123.

[56] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Directives on the Order of Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, no. 9b.

explicitly indicates when the celebrant, deacon and other ministers turn to the people. Hence the modification made with regard to the direction of the celebrant during the *Qurbana* in the *Directives* of 5 May 1988 concerns only the solemn and simple forms of the *Qurbana*.

In fact in *Directives* 19 and 64 the Congregation expressed its position with regard to the controversial question of Mass facing the people:

> No. 19: The Liturgy of the Word may be celebrated facing the people; for the Liturgy of the Eucharist cfr. no. 64.
>
> No. 64: If the Liturgy of the Word has been celebrated facing the people, it is highly desirable that the sacred ministers turn to face the altar at the *lavabo* (R 35) and maintain this position for the rest of the *Qurbana*, except where the ritual determines otherwise (e.g. for greetings, blessing, the distribution of communion, final blessing).[57]

Obviously this directive was formed with the intention of permitting Group I to celebrate the entire *Qurbana* facing the people. The liturgy of the Word facing the people is presupposed and the obligation to celebrate the liturgy of the Eucharist (Anaphora) facing the east or altar was reduced to a mere desire or recommendation.

The Order of *Qurbana* in the solemn and simple forms, amended according to the *Directives* was approved by the Oriental Congregation with its decree of 3 April 1989, prescribing that the new Order given by the Dicastery should be promulgated and should be used on 3 July 1989.[58] According to the instruction of the Congregation the Order of *Qurbana* with special directives for the solemn and simple forms was promulgated and implemented on 3 July 1989.[59] In the aforementioned decree of 3 April 1989 it was reaffirmed that "The norms and rubrics regarding solemn and

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[57] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Directives on the Order of Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, nos. 19 and 64.

[58] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Decretum* of 3 April 1989, Latin original and Malayalam translation in *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza* (Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference), Trivandrum 1989, IX-XI.

[59] *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza* (1989).

simple forms of the *Qurbana* cannot be extended to the *Raza* except in cases mentioned in the directive norms of this Dicastery".[60]

At the initial part of the *Taksa* one can find: 1) General Instructions regarding the Order of the *Qurbana* of the Syro-Malabar Church; 2) Directives for the *Qurbana* in Solemn and Simple Forms.[61] However, the aforementioned directive: "If the Liturgy of the Word has been celebrated facing the people, it is highly desirable that the sacred ministers turn to face the altar at the *lavabo* (R 35) and maintain this position for the rest of the *Qurbana*" is not inserted in the Missal 1989.

Hence only a few scholars who have studied the original *Directives* emanated by the Congregation on 5 May 1988 know about this, while the clergy and people, who use their respective Missals, are totally unaware of such a "highly desirable" manner of celebration. In brief, at that time Group I continued to celebrate the entire *Qurbana* facing the people; Group II celebrated the entire *Qurbana* facing the east or altar and Group III maintained the manner of celebrating the liturgy of the Word facing the people and the liturgy of the Eucharist facing the east.

In the decree of the Congregation approving the Order of *Qurbana* in solemn and simple forms it confirmed the norm already contained in the Directives of 5 May 1988 that "The norms and rubrics regarding solemn and simple forms of the *Qurbana* cannot be extended to the *Raza* except in cases expressly mentioned in the Directive Norms of this Dicastery".[62] Hence the *Taksa* of *Raza*, which prescribes the entire *Qurbana* facing the east, was almost the same in 1986 and 1989.

Although the Congregation for the Oriental Churches affirmed that "there should be one single altar Missal for all the forms of the *Qurbana* (*Raza*, Solemn and Simple), containing the

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60 Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Decretum* of 3 April 1989, in *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza* (1989), IX-XI.

61 *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza* (1989), IX-XV.

62 Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Decretum* of 3 April 1989, in *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza* (1989) IX-XI.

full text of the liturgy and all rubrics", Group I published another altar Missal entitled *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Oder of Qurbana in Solemn and Simple Forms*, containing only those two forms of *Qurbana*. Consequently the Missal containing the full text of the most solemn form of the *Qurbana* called *Raza* is unknown to the priests and faithful in the dioceses under Group I and obviously *Raza* is never celebrated by them.

3.4. Liturgical Controversy and Syro-Malabar Synod in Rome (1996)

On 16 December 1992 Pope John Paul II constituted the Syro-Malabar Church as a major archiepiscopal Church by the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori*.[63] Thus the Syro-Malabar Church obtained a "father and head" and a synod according to the Eastern tradition for collegial governance. However, considering the lack of communion and concord among the bishops and the identity crisis within the Syro-Malabar Church, the Holy Father did not grant to this Church all the powers which the synod of bishops with its head, the major archbishop can exercise according to the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. The Roman Pontiff reserved to his own person all that concerned episcopal elections and the liturgical order.[64]

Since the discord and controversy over the liturgical identity of the Syro-Malabar Church and over the mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* vigorously continued, an assembly of the synod was held in Rome from 8 to 16 January 1996. Some selected Syro-Malabar bishops, eminent Roman scholars and heads of the concerned departments of the Roman Curia presented their scholarly studies in order to help the bishops to evaluate the problems in the true

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[63] John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Quae maiori*, *AAS* 85 (1993) 398-399; *Synodal News*, no. 1 (August 1993) 10 & 12; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents*, 234-235.

[64] *Synodal News*, no.1 (1993) 9.

light and to sort out solutions.[65] In his inaugural address Pope John Paul II underlined that the synod "thus marks an important though not a definitive stage in the process over your Church's growth towards ever greater union and peace, towards the sharing of a common journey".[66] Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches also made the same point:

> This Synod is convoked with the hope that it will strengthen the communion among its members, confirm and enrich the communion that this Church shares with the Holy Father and his representatives, and foster the communion shared by all members of the College of Bishops.[67]

It is not the scope of this study to analyze or evaluate all the acts and decisions of this synod. Hence from the final statement of the synod, whose major part is dedicated to the liturgical question, we cite only numbers 2, 5 and 7 which are directly related to our theme.

> 2) Establish wherever possible places of prayer in which the Syro-Malabar liturgy in its integrity can be celebrated with solemnity and available for the faithful for participation.
>
> 5) Have the Holy *Qurbana* celebrated in the Major Seminaries, and as far as possible, in the other houses of formation, as per the Taksa, experimenting the Bema in the middle of the Church. On Sundays and feast days normally *Qurbana* should be celebrated in its full solemnity in these places.
>
> 7) For the next two years the Holy *Qurbana* will be celebrated according to the existing legislation as we move towards convergence on the basis of the other decisions taken by the Synod.[68]

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[65] The studies presented in the synod can be found in *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church,* Held in the Vatican from 8 to 16 January 1996 (edited by J. Porunnedam), Kochi 1996.

[66] *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church,* 15.

[67] A. Silvestrini, Introductory Address, in *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 17.

[68] Statement of the Synod, in *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 297.

The celebration of Syro-Malabar liturgy in its integrity and per Taksa signified the ideal celebration according to the approved *Raza* text, without the omissions, concessions and dispensations. It also meant the *Qurbana* facing the east or the altar. In the concluding speech Cardinal Antony Padiyara acknowledged that the main problem that hindered the unity of bishops was the dispute over the liturgical identity and that solutions had been found. He stated with satisfaction:

> We have come to the end of the week long assembly of our Synod held in this city where the head of the apostolic college has his Holy See. We came to this eternal city for this Holy Synod with a specific aim: to find out solutions, together with the representatives of the Holy See, for the problems that beset our Church since a few years. As you are well aware, these problems concern mainly the identity and liturgy of our Church. In our attempt we thought over and discussed the various aspects of the problems. We have also decided to accept a few of those proposals for the sake of unity of our Church which is very much in the heart of all of us. It goes without saying that they will not be acceptable to all of us in the same measure. But we accept them because we know that it is the salvation of the people of God that directs the actions in the Church of Christ.[69]

Although he declared, "we accept them", he also insinuated that they would not be put into practice, as it really happened. He acknowledged:

> I am fully conscious that the resolutions that we took in the Synod are extremely difficult to put into practice, particularly for those who are not convinced of them. It is also a question of going against one's own conscience. [...] Will it not be a great relief for all of us when we have found a solution for the liturgical problem which has been plaguing our Church for such a long time and that has caused enormous scandal to the faithful? Indeed, there can be a sense of victory or defeat in you depending on the stand you took. That is very human. But who are we? We are only servants, useless

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[69] A. Padiyara, Concluding Speech, in *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 31.

> servants. It is the victory or defeat of the Master that counts. [...] It is the people of God that matters for us.[70]

From the expressions used by Cardinal Padiyara in this concluding speech "extremely difficult to put into practice", "going against one's conscience", "a sense of victory or defeat" and so on it is evident that constrained by the circumstances in Rome some decisions were hammered out, but they would not be implemented. In fact the aforementioned decisions on the liturgy were not implemented by Group I and the desired unity and communion of bishops were not achieved with the synod in Rome.

In fact a few months after the synod, on the basis of false information circulated by certain responsible persons in an irresponsible manner, on 21 August 1996 (Tuesday) a group of about 100 undisciplined priests held a meeting at the Renewal Centre in Kaloor and then conducted a political style public march to Archbishop's House Ernakulam and submitted a memorandum or petition to Cardinal Antony Padiyara.[71] The underlying reason for such drastic acts was questions related to the liturgical identity of the Syro-Malabar Church, and especially the dispute over the mode of celebrating Holy Mass, the celebrant facing the east (altar) or the people. This demonstration of priests bewildered and anguished the Christian faithful and scandalized the adherents of other religions.

3.5. Revocation of the Reservation of the Liturgical Order to the Roman Pontiff and the Confirmation of Mass Facing the East (1998)

As we have seen above, when the Syro-Malabar Church was raised to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church on 16 December 1992, those matters pertaining to the episcopal elections

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[70] A. Padiyara, Concluding Speech, in *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 32.

[71] The news about the march was published in many of the national and local newspapers on 22 August 1996 (Friday). See report with photo in *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express*, *Mathrubhumi* and *Desabhimani*; report without photo in *Malayala Manorama* and *Deepika*. At that time television-channels were not so prevalent as today.

and the liturgical order were reserved to the person of the Roman Pontiff. On 19 January 1998 the Pope determined to confer on the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church the full exercise of the faculties foreseen in the Eastern Code in liturgical matters.[72] The Congregation for the Oriental Churches with its decree dated 19 January 1998 communicated this fact to the then apostolic administrator Varkey Vithayathil on 16 March 1998.[73] The decree of the Congregation stipulated:

> All things duly considered, following the indication of the Members of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches at their Ordinary Session held on 16 January 1998, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of this same Congregation, on the 19th day of January 1998, His Holiness Pope John Paul II hereby ceases to reserve to the person of the Roman Pontiff the liturgical order of the Syro-Malabar Church.[74]

On that occasion Pope John Paul II issued a letter dated 14 March 1998, addressed to the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, stating that the grant of the liturgical faculties according to the Eastern Code "is intended as an expression of the great confidence which I have in each one of you and in your Synod, through which you work together to serve the truth in charity".[75] Then the Pope highlighted the need for communion and concord among the bishops as follows:

> [...] You have to break the Eucharistic Bread in your communities. But in order for this to be a truthful and consistent action, you must break among yourselves the bread of charity; break it in order to build greater unity, a unity which will involve you personally and

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[72] See *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 10-11.

[73] On 11 November 1996 Pope John Paul II accepted the resignation of Antony Cardinal Padiyara and on the same day he appointed Father Varkey Vithayathil C.SS.R. as apostolic administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*, elevating him to the rank of titular archbishop of Acrida.

[74] *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 11.

[75] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 April 1998, 7; *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 8.

> will bind you in a specific way to Christ the Head in his Mystical Body which is the Church.[76]

Together with its decree the Congregation for the Oriental Churches also communicated to the bishops some *Fundamental Orientations concerning the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, "drafted with the consultation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which has expressed its approval".[77] Realizing that the root cause of the problems in the Syro-Malabar Church was the lack of agreement among the bishops on the liturgical identity, mainly manifested in the controversy over the direction of the celebrant during the *Qurbana*, the Congregation also underlined the need of communion among the bishops in the following words:

> It is the responsibility of the Synod to "safeguard the deposit of the faith" which the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church celebrates and proclaims "to the far and to the near" (cf. Is 57: 19; Ep 2: 17).
>
> This presumes that the communion of the Bishops of the Synod is constantly strengthened, a task which will require patience and perseverance. The communion will enable the Synod to achieve progressively the liturgical harmony which the Church will provide for the good of the faithful. The dismay recently expressed by the laity, men and women religious, priests and seminarians with regard to the liturgical disputes demands of the Bishops renewed commitment to communion.[78]

Referring to its own *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, as regards the specific question of liturgy facing the east the Oriental Congregation stated:

> Those of fundamental importance are the symbolic structure of the Church building which identifies the sanctuary with the heavens and the nave with the earth (*Instruction* nn. 102-104); the specific area from which the Word of God is proclaimed (*Instruction* n. 105); the orientation of the assembly which preceded by the Bishop or priest on pilgrimage together proceeds towards the heavenly Jerusalem,

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[76] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 April 1998, 7; *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 8.

[77] *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 12-17.

[78] *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 13.

invoking the return of the Lord "oriens ex alto" (*Instruction* n. 107).[79]

In spite of the failure of the synod held in Rome because of the non implementation of its decisions and the continuation of controversy the Congregation once more confirmed and ratified its well-known position concerning the orientation in liturgical prayer.

3.6. Temporary Recognition of Three Modes of Celebration (1998)

In the context of virulent controversy over the liturgical question, acrimonious discussions in mass media and scandalous indiscipline among some sections of the clergy, constrained by the tragic and grievous situation all the members of the central liturgical committee of the Syro-Malabar Church unanimously requested the synod of bishops held from 3 to 14 November 1998 to legitimate and recognize all the three modes of celebration of Holy *Qurbana* existed at that time.[80] The synod approved the proposals with some modifications and promulgated them as its decisions. We present here the report about the discussions on the theme and the decisions:

> After giving chance to all the members of the synod to make their statements on the matter the Apostolic Administrator proposed that the text of the proposals be read out clause by clause and discussed. It was done so and the proposals were accepted by the synod and modified as follows:
>
> *1. Being aware of the complexity of the present situation the synod felt that a uniformity in the mode of celebration of the Holy Qurbana is difficult today. Hence it decided to recognize and acknowledge the three modes of celebrating the Eucharist, namely 1) versus altare 2) versus populum and 3) liturgy of the Word versus populum and liturgy of the Eucharist versus altare until it reaches a consensus on the uniform mode of celebration. The eparchial bishop decides the form of celebration in his eparchy.*

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[79] *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 15.

[80] *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 35-37. We do not reproduce the text presented by the Central Liturgical Committee, in order to avoid repetition.

> In this connection the synod decided that in the Major Seminaries of Mangalapuzha and Vadavathoor the existing mode, namely *versus populum* until the end of the liturgy of the Word and the rest *versus altare* will continue. Changes will be introduced only after consulting the fathers of all major seminaries in the Syro-Malabar Church. The Commissions for the seminaries were entrusted with the task of consulting them and reporting to the synod.
>
> Likewise in the case of the Syro-Malabar missions outside the Syro-Malabar eparchies, both in India and abroad, the synod decided to maintain the *status quo* in the existing missions. Regarding the prospective the synod will issue some directives and guidelines after further discussion on the matter.
>
> There was also a long discussion about adopting a uniform mode of celebrating Holy Eucharist. The proposition that to arrive at such a form is difficult in the present circumstances was accepted by the synod. However, all members agreed to strive to arrive at such a form at the earliest possible.
>
> *2. The text for celebrating the Eucharist should be the one approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority.*
>
> *3. The form of celebration of the Eucharist in an eparchy should be respected by all resident and visiting priests.*[81]

Among the three modes of celebration, the entire *Qurbana versus altare* was prescribed in the *Taksa* approved by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which promotes, recommends and enhances such celebration in all the Eastern Churches. The third mode of celebration: liturgy of the Word *versus populum* and liturgy of the Eucharist *versus altare,* was also recognized by the Apostolic See in 1989. Hence practically the synod recognized and acknowledged only the second mode of celebration, namely the entire Eucharist *versus populum*, which lacked legitimacy until the said juridical act of the synod. The synod made this recognition until then "it reaches a consensus on the uniform mode of celebration". The matters concerning the decision of the Synod on the uniform mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* will be treated in the next article.

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[81] *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 37-38; italics as in the original. See also the decisions in pages 47-48.

3.7. Mass Facing the People in the Syro-Malabar Church and the Position of the Tabernacle

At least from the time of the Synod of Diamper the Eucharist began to be reserved in Malabar churches according to the Latin tradition; normally the tabernacle was placed at the centre of the altar. Even after the start of liturgy facing the people in some dioceses the tabernacle is kept at the centre. Then the priests, especially in small churches, stand just in front of the tabernacle, turning his back to the Eucharistic Lord, facing the people. As we have already seen, if a priest is really conscious of the real presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, it would be impossible for him to commit such a disrespectable and impious act, instead he will turn to the Lord and adore him, also according to the spirit of Indian religious culture.

A few years ago a committee of experts was appointed to study about the most suitable place of the tabernacle in Syro-Malabar churches. With regard to this in the report of the synod held from 17 to 28 August 2010 the following information can be found:

> [...] The expert committee was unanimous in suggesting that the Tabernacle should be placed away from the altar and within the sanctuary. At the same time, the Bishops felt that to give it as a directive would create confusion in the minds of priests and people in the present situation. Still the Bishops felt that it would be good to give two directives on the eparchial level: 1. Not to place the Tabernacle attached to the altar, and 2. Not to place it away from the sanctuary or in a separate chapel. These directives are to be given by individual Bishops for the new churches to be built in their eparchies.[82]

From this report it is evident that the synod has not made a juridically binding decision as regards the position of the tabernacle. However, for avoiding the impious act indicated above, those Syro-Malabar bishops and priests who celebrate *Qurbana* facing the people according to the Western practice, may also adopt at least the Western solution in this regard, namely the

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[82] *Synodal News*, vol. 18, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2010) 70.

tabernacle may be removed from the centre of the altar and may be placed at a side or in another suitable place. Thus the embarrassing situation of celebrating just in front of the tabernacle, turning the back to the Eucharistic Lord, can be avoided.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in the universal Roman Latin Church the Anaphora or the Canon of the Mass facing the Lord has not become extinct. It is practised all over the world in some ancient churches, monasteries and sanctuaries, even in the major basilicas in Rome. Moreover the entire Mass is celebrated turning to the east or to the Lord by the communities that follow the Missal of St Pius V. The Mass facing the east or the Lord became completely extinct only in some dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church, perhaps because the priests of these dioceses are not aware of the practice of the universal Roman Church, but only that of the Latin priests in Kerala. Also the celebration of the entire Eucharistic liturgy at a single altar, as practised in some dioceses in Kerala is not in accord with the Roman Missal, which prescribes distinction between the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist.

Article Six

UNANIMOUS DECISION OF THE SYRO-MALABAR BISHOPS ON THE UNIFORM MODE OF CELEBRATING HOLY *QURBANA*

Introduction

This is not really an article; we are simply presenting the documentation concerning the unanimous decision of the Syro-Malabar Bishops to celebrate the Holy *Qurbana* in the same manner in the entire Syro-Malabar Church. An introduction (in italics) is added to each document, which enables the readers to comprehend its significance in a better manner. For the texts in Malayalam we have provided our own English translation.

1. Uniform Mode of Celebrating the Holy *Qurbana*: Report of the Synodal Discussions

The last synod of the second millennium, held from 14 to 20 November 1999, in view of the Great Jubilee 2000 considered a matter of prime importance, namely the painful disunity in the Syro-Malabar Church, provoked by the dispute over the liturgy. After free and fruitful discussions, the synod unanimously decided to celebrate Holy Qurbana in a uniform manner in the whole Syro-Malabar Church. Here we present the report of the discussions as found in the official Bulletin of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church.[1]

The first proposal, namely, the need for a uniform mode of celebrating the Divine Liturgy was discussed at length by the synod. All the members expressed their opinion in this matter. The following opinions were expressed by some of the members: 1) in view of peaceful implementation of the decision convene a meeting of the Central Liturgical Committee and certain representatives from the eparchies and present the formula before

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[1] *Synodal News*. vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (December 1999) 60-61.

them. Such a consultation may be done in view of taking a decision or after taking a decision in view of its practical implementation; 2) celebrate the entire part after the anaphora facing the people, with or without a procession to the Bema with the Sacred Species; 3) let the eparchies continue with the present way of celebrating the *Qurbana* as all are happy with it. Some others were not in favour of these opinions. Finally the synod unanimously agreed to have the Syro-Malabar Liturgy celebrated in the following way: 1) from the beginning till anaphora – facing the people, 2) the whole of anaphora, communion inclusive – facing the altar and 3) the part after communion – again facing the people.

The synod also asked the Commission for Liturgy to prepare a statement with necessary details to be presented to the synod for approval. It was also decided to take the necessary steps with the help of CLC and the Liturgical Research Centre to improve the text in its theology, language and cultural expression taking into account also the directives of the Holy See as well as the opinion of the people and the pastoral situation so that the celebration may become more meaningful. The suggestion to celebrate the entire part after the anaphora facing the people is also to be studied.

As for the options given in the Thaksa it was clarified that they cannot be restricted because they have been legitimately authorised by the Holy See.

Mar Thomas Elavanal read out the draft of the directives concerning the uniform mode of celebration of the Holy *Qurbana*. A clause was requested to be added concerning the options making it clear that they are within the competence of the celebrant. The draft was accepted in its entirety.

The synod decided that the uniform mode of the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* shall come into effect on 3rd July 2000 and that a joint pastoral letter in this regard shall be sent out by the Apostolic Administrator in such a way that it can be read out in the churches on 2nd January 2000. The Apostolic Administrator was asked to prepare it in consultation with the Permanent Synod. However, it was decided to publish the decision on the uniform mode of celebration immediately after the synod.

2. The Final Unanimous Decision of the Bishops and the Statement of the Commission for Liturgy

The resolutions of the synod with regard to the uniform mode of celebrating Holy Qurbana are given among the official decision as numbers 21, 25-27.[2] *In addition an official statement of the Commission for Liturgy approved by the synod was published.*[3] *Here an English translation of the original statement in Malayalam is provided.*

The Synod decided:

21) To have the Syro-Malabar Liturgy celebrated in the following way: 1) from the beginning till anaphora – facing the people; 2) the whole of anaphora, communion inclusive – facing the altar and 3) the part after the communion – again facing the people.

25) To approve the statement with necessary details presented by the Commission for Liturgy concerning the uniform mode of celebrating the *Qurbana*. (The statement is given below).

26) To begin the agreed form of celebrating the *Qurbana* in all the eparchies on 3rd July 2000.

27) To issue a common pastoral letter to be read out in the churches on 2nd January 2000 introducing the uniform mode of celebration of the *Qurbana* and exhorting the faithful to work together to usher in an era of greater unity and love. The Permanent Synod shall approve the text of the pastoral letter.

The Statement of the Commission for Liturgy Approved by the Synod

Matters concerning Holy *Qurbana* unanimously decided by the venerable fathers of the Synod on 19 November 1999:

1. The Holy *Qurbana* is to be celebrated, from the beginning to the Anaphora facing the people, from the Anaphora until the

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[2] *Synodal News*, vol. 7, nos. 1& 2 (December 1999) 71-72.

[3] *Synodal News*, vol. 7, nos. 1& 2 (December 1999) 72-73.

Holy Communion (inclusive) facing the altar and after the Communion facing the people.

2. The Holy *Qurbana* begins at the table of the Word (*Bema*).

3. At the beginning of the prayer, "Lord of all, we praise you", in those churches, where there exists the custom of opening the sanctuary veil, the celebrant can make one bow of reverence facing the altar; then he turns to the *Bema*.

4. During the hymn of *Halleluia*, the celebrant brings the Gospel from the altar to the *Bema*.

5. During the *Karozutha* (proclamation-prayer) bread and wine can be prepared. After the preparation, the celebrant continues the prayer at the *Bema*.

6. At the beginning of the hymn/prayer, "firmly I have trusted in the Lord", the concelebrants, if any or the deacon, bring bread and wine to the altar (from the *Betgazza*) and stand facing the altar (for the offertory). Once the prayer that opens, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son", begins, the priests turn to the *Bema*. If there are no concelebrants, the celebrant, after having offered bread and wine at the altar, returns to the *Bema*.

7. The celebrant, after blessing the ministrant reciting, "May God, the Lord of all [...]", pronounces the prayer that begins, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and making three profound bows, comes close to the altar, kisses thrice the altar and continues the *Qurbana*, facing the altar (not facing the people).

8. After the Holy Communion, once the preparation of chalice and paten is terminated, he comes to the *Bema* and continues the rest of the *Qurbana* facing the people.

9. This order is to be kept for the celebration of the three forms of the *Qurbana*.

10. The options mentioned in the Taksa (Order) of the *Qurbana* are granted to the celebrants.

20 November 1999, Mount St Thomas,

Mar Thomas Elavanal (signed).

3. Concluding Speech of Mar Varkey Vithayathil: the Uniform Mode of Celebrating Holy *Qurbana* as the Best Possible Solution

The concluding speech of Mar Varkey Vithayathil delivered on 20 November 1999 was totally centred on the uniform mode of celebrating Holy Qurbana in the whole Syro-Malabar Church. After expressing his great satisfaction for the all-time important decision of the synod, he pointed out that a great danger looming in the horizon, namely the disintegration of the Syro-Malabar Church, "which our forefathers loved and fostered with so many hardships", was averted by the decision of the bishops. He acknowledged that "our lack of unity in this matter has been such a scandal for Christians and non-Christians alike for more than three decades" and augured for a new era of love and unity.[4]

Dear brother archbishops and bishops,

It is with great satisfaction that we are here today to conclude this brief but very fruitful synodal session. As I have said in my inaugural address this session had a special significance as it was held against the backdrop of the Mission Assembly and as the last session in this century. Now with the agreement that we have reached concerning the uniform mode of celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* which is the sum and summit of our Christian life this session has acquired an all-time importance because we can walk together, in synod, to the year of the Great Jubilee. My gaze turns to the Almighty in gratitude. At the same time I thank and congratulate all of you my brother bishops and archbishops for making this reconciliation possible. We have averted that way a great danger that was looming in the horizon. That danger was nothing but the disintegration of our Church which our forefathers loved and fostered with so many hardships. They will be looking down from heaven with a sign of relief.

I have no doubt that our people will accept this unanimous decision of ours whole-heartedly because our lack of unity in this

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[4] The speech can be found in *Synodal News*, vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (December 1999) 74-75.

matter has been such a scandal for Christians and non-Christians alike for more than three decades. We have wasted a lot of energy, time and money; but above all we have wasted a lot of opportunities for giving our faithful a better example of Christian life. Let us begin a new era. It is my hope and wish that the decision can be implemented by 3rd July 2000 with your co-operation and collaboration.

Of course, this is only a beginning. There are miles to go if we are to restore fully the lost communion among ourselves. It is an arduous and difficult journey. But what awaits us at the end of that journey definitely makes it worth undertaking. First of all we have to convince ourselves that the solution we have found out is the best possible solution in the present circumstances. Only when we are convinced we will be able to convince others of the necessity of such a solution. Secondly we have to be sincere in our efforts to implement this solution. There should be no negative remarks from anyone of us against anyone who are or rather were not of our view. Each of us should be extremely careful not to create any impression that this was imposed upon us. It is equally important for every one of us not to write or speak anything to anywhere or to anyone, including our superiors, with disagreeing notes.

Thirdly, we have to make every effort to create an awareness and sense of necessity among our clergy, religious and laity of the present solution. I would insist that the clergy must be told in no uncertain terms that it is extremely important to go along with our decision. They are the ones in direct contact with the faithful.

Fourthly, it is necessary to give a balanced catechesis to our faithful. Care must be taken not to go to extremes. Sensibilities of all are to be taken into account. It is often the insensibility about the problems of the other that vitiates the situation.

Having said all this I do not mean that everything concerning the Holy *Qurbana* is decided once and for all. There is still room for improvements. As it was pointed out several times in the synod those topics for improvement can be entrusted to the Liturgical Research Centre. We have to look into the linguistic, theological, pastoral, cultural aspects etc. of the Sacred Liturgy. There will be always new developments in the Sacred Liturgy. We should not be

reluctant to study them and to adopt them if found useful for our faithful because Liturgy is not something static but dynamic and growing constantly.

Apart from the Holy *Qurbana* several other topics were on our agenda and we have covered all except a few. I am hopeful that the remaining ones can be taken up in the next session scheduled for the middle of 2000.

Once more I thank all of you for your active participation in the discussions and positive contributions. May Mary the Mother of Christ help us in our efforts to guide our people who are entrusted to our care with genuine Christian leadership. May St Thomas our Father in faith intercede for us with the Lord. With these words I formally conclude the VIIth Synod (1999).

✠ Varkey Vithayathil C.Ss.R., Apostolic Administrator,

Mount St. Thomas, 20-11-1999.

4. Joint Pastoral Letter of the Syro-Malabar Bishops on the Uniform Mode of Celebrating Holy *Qurbana*

This pastoral letter was published only in Malayalam. Since at present the Syro-Malabar Church has become global, I have made an English translation for enabling the new generations in foreign countries also to comprehend the content of this important pastoral letter. This document, which contains official information concerning the uniform mode of celebrating Holy Qurbana and the directives for the same, also acknowledges the scandalous disunity and conflicts that tormented the Syro-Malabar Church for more than three decades and highlights the need for unity and communion through the uniform celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity.[5]

Venerable Brethren, dear Children,

Hope that you have been informed of the assembly of the synod of bishops of our Church held from 15 to 20 November

[5] The original Malayalam text can be found in *Synodal News*, vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (December 1999) 117-123.

(1999) at Mount St Thomas, the seat of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia. In this meeting – as you have already known from the press – some decisions were taken, regarding a uniform mode of celebrating the *Qurbana*. This pastoral letter has the intention of informing you in detail about the decisions taken and of soliciting the co-operation of all for their implementation.

The position of the celebrant during the *Qurbana*, that is, whether to face the altar or the people, is a question that provoked a lot of debates and scandal. The synod has succeeded to put an end to this dispute and to arrive at a consensus regarding a single form of celebration. This is the decision of the synod:

The Holy *Qurbana* is to be celebrated, from the beginning to the Anaphora facing the people, from the Anaphora until the holy Communion (inclusive) facing the altar and after the Communion facing the people.

As an explanation to this resolution, some other matters have also been unanimously decided by the synod. Those are the following.

1. The Holy *Qurbana* begins at the table of the Word (*Bema*).

2. At the beginning of the prayer, "Lord of all, we praise you", in those churches, where there exists the custom of opening the sanctuary veil, the celebrant can make one bow of reverence facing the altar; then he turns to the *Bema*.

3. During the hymn of *Halleluia*, the celebrant brings the Gospel from the altar to the *Bema*.

4. During the *Karozutha* (proclamation-prayer) bread and wine can be prepared. After the preparation, the celebrant continues the prayer at the *Bema*.

5. At the beginning of the hymn/prayer, "firmly I have trusted in the Lord", the concelebrants, if any or the deacon, bring bread and wine to the altar (from the *Betgazza*) and stand facing the altar (for the offertory). Once the prayer that opens, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son", begins, the priests turn to the *Bema*. If there are no concelebrants, the celebrant, after having offered bread and wine at the altar, returns to the *Bema*.

6. The celebrant, after blessing the ministrant reciting, "May God, the Lord of all [...]", pronounces the prayer that begins, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and making three profound bows, comes close to the altar, kisses thrice the altar and continues the *Qurbana*, facing the altar (not facing the people).

7. After the Holy Communion, once the preparation of chalice and paten is terminated, he comes to the *Bema* and continues the rest of the *Qurbana* facing the people.

8. This order is to be kept for the celebration of the three forms of the *Qurbana*.

9. The options mentioned in the Taksa (Order) of the *Qurbana* are granted to the celebrants.

Among the above mentioned, the numbers 8 and 9, it seems, require a bit of explanation. The three forms (of the *Qurbana*) are the *Raza* (the most solemn form) the solemn form and the simple form. The varying degrees of solemnity provide the basis for the variety of forms. The celebrant, the sacred ceremonies, the readings, the hymns, the use of incense etc. are the factors of solemnity (General Instructions regarding the Order of the *Qurbana*; No. 1).

Whatever be the form of celebration, the Taksa of the *Qurbana* states that some elements can be included or excluded. The right to decide whether to include them or not, rests with the celebrant. Since these options are granted directly by the Holy See this right of the celebrant cannot be limited. Moreover, we exhort all, specially our priests to read carefully and follow accurately the instructions given in the *Taksa* with regard to the celebration of *Qurbana*.

It is not to be understood that with the implementation of this decision everything regarding the celebration of the *Qurbana* is fixed. The Synod has entrusted the Central Liturgical Committee, an organ of the Liturgical Commission and the newly founded Liturgical Research Centre to make further studies as well as researches regarding the form of the *Qurbana*. The language of the order of the *Qurbana*, theology, pastoral thrusts, inculturation, the prayers which change according to each liturgical period (*Propria*), the guidelines and teaching of the Holy See from time to time

concerning the liturgy and other subjects are proposed by the Synod for this study.

This decision is a small step against the liturgical problem that for more than three decades has been weakening and destroying our Church. It is extremely painful that we have turned the *Qurbana*, the sacrament of unity and love, into an instrument of disunity and conflicts. We have forgotten the Word of God: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10: 17). It is the intense desire that Christ may not be divided again and hence the present situation has to be changed, that has prompted us to put an end to the diverse forms of the celebration of Holy *Qurbana* and to decide over a single form.

Through this, we hope, our Church enters the path of unity, peace and progress. In the past, there had been many attempts to resolve the liturgical crisis. All these, implicitly or explicitly, have prompted today's decision. Particularly, the discussions and suggestions of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Assembly held in November 1998 and the Mission Assembly in November 1999 have accelerated the search for a speedy solution to the problem of the order of the *Qurbana*. The decision of the Synod in 1998, on the suggestion of the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly, to retain for the moment the three existing forms of the celebration, has considerably smoothened the tense situation. This became the first step to a solution to the problem.

We have taken the present decision with great anguish. This has caused pains to many. But what is important is the unity of the Church. For that we must be ready to compromise and suffer. We do not claim that the decision of the Synod is the best one. But, in the present circumstances, giving importance to the unity and growth of the Church and without causing further wounds, this remained the only one decision possible. We hope that you will also accept the same.

The above mentioned decision of the Synod on the uniform mode of *Qurbana* will enter into force, everywhere in the Syro-Malabar Church, from 3 July, the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle in the Great Jubilee Year (2000). We request the co-operation of you all for the implementation of this. Such a long interval was

proposed in order to make the necessary arrangements in the church and to prepare mentally.

The division regarding the Ourbana has obscured our Christian testimony and also has frequently led to counter-witness. I pray, "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17, 21). May this prayer of the Lord find full fruition in our Church. We are entering the 2000th year of the incarnation of Jesus, who led the whole humanity towards reconciliation and peace. On this occasion, it would really be unfortunate that the *Qurbana*, founded by our Lord in order that we may experience the fruits of the mysteries of his incarnation, has caused division among us. "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (1 Cor 1, 10). Let us accept this request of St. Paul. Let us pray that the words of St. Paul, "In Him the whole structure is joined together and, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2, 21), be realised in the Syro-Malabar Church. We wish you all a Jubilee year full of God's grace and bless you all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church:

✠ Varkey Vithayathil C.Ss.R. (Apostolic Administrator)
✠ Joseph Powathil (Changanacherry)
✠ Jacob Thoomkuzhy (Trichur)
✠ George Valiamattam (Tellicherry)
✠ Kuriakose Kunnacherry (Kottayam)
✠ Joseph Pallikaparampil (Palai)
✠ George Punnakkottil (Kothamangalam)
✠ Abraham D. Mattam VC (Satna)
✠ Gratian Mundadan CMI (Bijnor)
✠ James Pazhayattil (Irinjalakuda)
✠ Gregory Karotemprel CMI (Rajkott)
✠ Dominic Kokkattu CST (Gorakhpur)
✠ Joseph Pastor Neelankavil CMI (Sagar)
✠ Mathew Vattakkuzhy (Kanjirapally)
✠ Paul Chittilappally (Thamarassery)

✠ Vijay Anand Nedumpuram CMI (Chanda)
✠ Jacob Manathodath (Palghat)
✠ Simon Stock Palathara CMI (Jagadalpur)
✠ Emmanuel Pothanamuzhy CMI (Mananthavady)
✠ George Alencherry (Thuckalay)
✠ Thomas Elavanal MCBS (Kalyan)
✠ Thomas Chakiath (auxiliary bishop of Ernakulam)
✠ Sebastian Vadakkel (Ujjain)
✠ Mathew Moolakkattu OSB (auxiliary bishop of Kottayam)
✠ Lawrence Mukkuzhy (Belthangady)
✠ Joseph Kunnath CMI (Adilabad)

Given from the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia on 15 December 1999.

NB: This pastoral letter should be read on Sunday, 2 January 2000 during the *Qurbana*.

5. The Approval of the Holy See and the Universal Validity of the Synodal Decision

According to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches the liturgical laws, enacted by the synod and promulgated by the major archbishop have the force of law everywhere in the world (CCEO c. 150 § 2). Despite this, the Apostolic Administrator Mar Varkey Vithayathil submitted the decision of the synod to the Apostolic See for evaluation and approval. With the letter of 17 December 1999 the Congregation for the Oriental Churches expressed satisfaction for this positive step and approved the decision of the synod, considering it a fundamental contribution to ecclesial communion in the Syro-Malabar Church. The Congregation also gave three directives for the correct implementation of the decision.[6] *Once approved by the Holy See, even the disciplinary laws of the synod have universal validity (c. 150 § 3). Since the decision concerning the uniform mode of celebrating Qurbana pertains to the category of liturgical laws and since it was approved by the Apostolic See, it has the force of law everywhere in the world.*

Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, Prot. N. 1796/99, Roma, 17 dicembre 1999.

To His Excellency, Mar Varkey Vithayathil C.Ss.R., Apostolic Administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly.

Your Excellency,

Together with the letter of 21 November 1999, the text concerning the mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana*, approved unanimously by the Syro-Malabar Synod during its session from 15 to 20 November has arrived at this Congregation.

The evaluation of the text, the form of its approval and the commitment of the Synod for its immediate and accurate diffusion offer possibility for this Congregation to rejoice heartily over the attainment of this important result.

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[6] The letter of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches (Italian) and the enclosure (English) can be found in *Synodal News*, vol. 8, nos. 2 (December 2000) 45-47.

This Dicastery has not any objections with regard to the decision adopted, which it considers a new and important step in the identity consciousness of the Syro-Malabar Church and a fundamental contribution to ecclesial communion, through an homogenous pastoral praxis. Enclosed herewith are some concrete directives for the correct application of the provision.

In order that the decision may produce the desired result, it is indispensable that in its promulgation and application, the entire Synod of Bishops – both collegially and each of the members individually – assumes full pastoral responsibility for its faithful and correct implementation.

With sentiments of distinct regards I remain,

Yours most devotedly, Achille Cardinal Silvestrini, Prefect; M. Marusyn, Secretary.

ENCLOSURE

1. The rubrics to be promulgated for the implementation of this synodal decision should be unmistakably explicit. They should state clearly, as in the above mentioned document, that during the Anaphora the priest faces the east (or the altar, i.e., with his back to the congregation, leading the people in prayer while facing in the same direction the people themselves are facing); and that the priest begins to face in this direction (toward the altar and away from the congregation) beginning with and including the Prayer of *accessus ad altare*: "I give you thanks, my Father, Lord of heaven and earth [...]". The priest remains facing in this direction during the entire Anaphora, except of course at those points where the traditional rubrics order him to turn to the congregation for greeting.

2. It should be noted that in churches which have restored the once-traditional Bema in the centre of the nave, in the midst of the congregation – and such a restoration would certainly be desirable at least *ad experimentum* for example, in liturgical centres and seminary or monastic chapels – then during the Liturgy of the Word the clergy on the Bema would be seated in the midst of the people and facing the same direction as they, in the direction of the lecterns for the readings of the Liturgy of the Word.

3. Furthermore, in churches so designed, it would not be necessary for the presiding priest to come to the Bema for the concluding rites of the liturgy, which would be celebrated from the front of the questroma or sanctuary platform, facing the people.

6. Dispensation from the Synodal Law and Non-Implementation of the Unanimous Decision in Some Dioceses

In seven dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church the unanimous decision of the bishops could not be implemented on the fixed date of 3 July 2000 because of various historical reasons and adverse circumstances. In some of these dioceses a dispensation was granted on the basis of canon 1538 of CCEO. As a model we present here the text of the dispensation granted by Mar Varkey Vithayathil, promoted as major archbishop on 18 December 1999, to the priests of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly just three days before the implementation of the synodal decision in the form of a circular letter.[7] *For the convenience of the readers we also cite the relevant canons, in virtue of which the dispensation was awarded.*

Circular letter, No. 6/2000, June 30, 2000.

Letter to the Priests of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly regarding the Implementation of the Synodal Decision on the Celebration of the Eucharist.

Dear Rev. Fathers,

Realizing that my directive (circular letter no. 5/2000) dated 30.05. 2000 to implement the decision of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church last November concerning the celebration of the Eucharist has caused great pain and agony to most of you, and having satisfied myself that the implementation of this decision will cause irreparable damage to unity and harmonious co-operation among priests and in parishes, I, while adhering faithfully to the Synodal decision, in virtue of CCEO canon 1538, temporally postpone its implementation in the

[7] The circular letter can be found in *Ernakulam Missam* 70 (July 2000) 7.

Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly so that an explosive pastoral situation and grave spiritual harm to the faithful may be avoided.

Wishing you a very happy Feast of St. Thomas, our Apostle,

Yours ever in the Lord,

Mar Varkey Vithayathil , Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly

Canon 1538 § 1: "The eparchial bishop can dispense in special cases from both the common law and the particular laws of his Church *sui iuris* the Christian faithful over whom he exercises power in accordance with law, whenever he deems it conducive to their spiritual good, unless reservation has been made by the authority which enacted the laws".

§ 2: "If it is difficult to contact the authority which has reserved to itself a dispensation, and at the same time there is danger of grave harm in delay, any hierarch can dispense in special cases the Christian faithful over whom he exercises power in accordance with the norm of law, provided the dispensation is one which the said authority grants in the same circumstances, without prejudice to can. 396".

Canon 396: "Except for the case, in which the invalidity of sacred ordination is declared, loss of the clerical state does not carry with it a dispensation from the obligation of celibacy, which is granted only by the Roman Pontiff".

7. The Tragedy of Non-Implementation: the Continuation of Disunity with regard to the Celebration of Holy *Qurbana*

After the failure of some bishops including the Major Archbishop to implement the unanimous decision concerning the Holy Qurbana, the first session of the synod, held from 10 to 22 July 2000, thoroughly evaluated the tragic situation and proposed solutions. In the final statement issued to the press the synod upheld its decision and required that all should implement the uniform mode of celebration, creating favourable circumstances in their dioceses, but no expiry date was fixed for the same. Minimum pastoral prudence teaches that in the personal dioceses and parishes as well as in religious communities outside the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church, where Christian faithful from different regions cohabit, if the visiting bishops and priests from different dioceses celebrate Qurbana in different ways it would create disunity and consternation among the faithful and scandal among the people of other Churches and religions. In order to avoid the globalization of conflicts inside the territory of the Church, all the bishops agreed to celebrate the Holy Qurbana in the uniform manner according to the synodal decision outside the proper territory. We present here the assessment of the Synod and the passages concerning the non-implementation of the synodal decision from the opening and concluding addresses of the Major Archbishop.[8]

7.1. From the Opening Address of the Major Archbishop

[...] You are already in the know of the development with regard to the implementation of the synodal decision on the uniform mode of celebration of the Divine Liturgy. While some

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[8] Extracts from the opening and concluding addresses of the Major Archbishop in *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1, September 2000, 9-11 & 39; assessment of the Synod with the indication of solutions and the final statement in *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 17-21.

eparchies implemented the decision others could not do so on account of the stiff opposition of the clergy. A clear picture of the pastoral situation throughout our Church in this regard can be had only when we shall share what has taken place in the various eparchies. Unless we identify the causes for this deep-rooted and wide-spread opposition of priests to this decision of the synod and remove them, we shall never solve this long-standing liturgical dispute that is eroding our credibility and destroying the Syro-Malabar Church.

[...] At the same time we must be wary about the disintegrating forces within the Church. They are the true enemies of the Church. These enemies may take the form of persons or ideologies. In both cases they are more dangerous than the worst enemies from outside. We know that there is no dearth of such forces that are at work in our Church. It is a God-given occasion to make a sincere examination of conscience and make corrections wherever needed if we are to survive here as a Church. Let us pray that through the intercession of Mary our Blessed Mother and St Thomas, our Father in the faith we may ever proclaim the Word of God fearlessly [...].

Mount St. Thomas, 10 July 2000,

Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil C.Ss. R., Major Archbishop.

7.2. Assessment of the Implementation of the Decision on the Uniform Mode of Celebrating the Holy *Qurbana* Made by the Synod

The Major Archbishop informed the Synod that the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches asked for a report of the developments connected with the implementation of the decision of the Synod on the uniform mode of celebrating the Holy *Qurbana*. In order to help him compile the report he requested all the bishops to give him a brief report on the implementation of the decision in their eparchies.

He also invited the bishops to share with the synod the developments connected with the implementation of the synodal decision on *Qurbana*. All the eparchial bishops shared their

experiences in implementing the decision of the synod on the uniform mode of celebrating the Holy *Qurbana*. Some of the bishops including the Major Archbishop said that they could not implement the decision in spite of their best efforts because of the resistance especially from the clergy. Some others said that they could implement the decision, even though some of their clergy expressed apprehensions as to how far it would be implemented in other eparchies. One bishop said that he could implement the decision but had to reverse it because of the developments in the neighbouring eparchies. In some of the eparchies outside the *territorium proprium* the implementation was reported to be partial.

When all the members briefed the synod about the implementation or non-implementation of the decision the Major Archbishop asked whether they had some proposals for the future course of action in this regard. He pointed out that since a common vision of the identity of our Church was lacking among the bishops themselves it is not easy to arrive at a solution. He added that it was essential to find out the reason for the widespread opposition to the decision among the clergy. The general feeling reflected in the sharing was that the synod should stand by its decision and that it should reiterate it in a common statement to allay the doubts in the minds of the faithful, especially of those eparchies that implemented the decision.

The following were pointed out to be the main causes of the unfortunate situation: open and clandestine squad work by some groups who influenced the others; lenient approach of the synod against those who signed the memorandum sent to the Major Archbishop; lack of enough positive publicity and abundance of negative publicity concerning the decision; lack of catechesis in the tradition of the Oriental Churches.

There was difference of opinion among the members with regard to the opportuneness and necessity of issuing a statement of the synod concerning the implementation of the decision, the content and nature of the statement, means by which it may be made public and so on. The synod in the end found it necessary to issue a statement and to give it for publication in all leading newspapers, though some members felt that unless the various

steps to be taken to implement the decision in all eparchies were first clarified a statement was meaningless and hence not acceptable. Others felt that a statement was necessary and possible. In the end all agreed to the proposal to set up a committee for drafting the statement. Bishops Sebastian Vadakel (convener), Mathew Moolakatt and Lawrence Mukkuzhy were nominated as members of the committee.

Before discussing the draft of the statement the synod discussed also the practical steps to be taken to create a conducive atmosphere for the implementation of the decision. Some of the measures proposed were the following: 1) courses for eparchial officials for better interaction among them, 2) dialogue with the priests who are doing squad works, 3) list a few topics of relevance and ask the Research Centre to make a study of them, 4) close collaboration between the Research Centre and the CLC, 5) close collaboration between the Doctrinal Commission and the Committee for the Research Centre, 6) a common text book on ecclesiology for use in the seminaries, 7) determination of experimental centres, 8) revision and adaptation of the liturgy along with its restoration, 9) a live-together of the Consultors/Forane Vicars of the eparchies in view of fostering understanding and unity, 10) stop open criticism of authority through the press and television, 11) seminars for priests on the identity and tradition of our Church. Dialogue with them on the basis of papal documents in view of clarifying ideas and dispelling doubts, 12) a *colloquium* arranged by the Doctrinal Commission for the synodal members so that they themselves may have a common vision of the nature of our Church and her mission.

The draft of the statement prepared by the committee was thoroughly discussed by the synod and was approved with some modifications. The following is the final text issued to the press:

Statement of the Synod concerning the celebration of *Qurbana* issued to the press[9]

The intense desire of the people of God for achieving more unity in the Syro-Malabar Church was most explicitly manifested

[9] The original statement given to the press was in Malayalam; we provide our own English translation.

on the occasion of the major archiepiscopal assembly in 1998. Among the proposals this assembly submitted to the synod of bishops, the first one states thus: "It is necessary to completely overcome (resolve) the differences of opinion with regard to matters concerning the liturgy. Our strong opinion is that everywhere in the Church there should be uniformity in the manner of celebrating Holy *Qurbana*. However, since this is difficult in today's particular circumstances, permission can be granted to continue all the three modes of celebration in vogue at present.[10] Even so there should be only a single manner of celebration in each diocese. After due consultations, the diocesan bishops should decide, which manner of celebration should be adopted in each diocese. In mission dioceses necessary adaptations can be made according to the circumstances of time and place with the approval of the Church. If the aforementioned three modes of celebration are continued for a long time it will be detrimental to the unity which we aim at. Hence an action-project should be formulated for implementing the uniform mode of celebrating *Qurbana* within a determined period of time".

According to these proposals the synod of bishops held in November over and above all other considerations with the aim of obtaining unity in the Church unanimously decided a uniform mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* and determined that this should be implemented in the entire Church on 3 July 2000. We are pleased that this decision of the synod has been implemented in most of the dioceses. However, we are sorry that in some dioceses the decision could not be implemented. We understand that the decision could not be implemented in these dioceses, because of some particular circumstances. Since the decision of the synod remains in vigour, all should take care to implement it, creating favourable circumstances.

The statement on behalf of the synod was signed by Mar Jacob Manathodath, secretary of the synod and bishop of Palghat.

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[10] The three modes of celebration in vogue at that time were: 1) the entire *Qurbana* facing the East, 2) the *Qurbana* facing the people and 3) liturgy of the word facing the people and the Anaphora facing the east.

It was also agreed by the bishops that in the mission centres in India and abroad they would all celebrate the Holy *Qurbana* according to the synodal decision.

7.3. From the Concluding Speech of the Major Archbishop

My dear brother Archbishops and Bishops,

It is with a sense of relief that we are here for the concluding sitting of this synodal session for we all came, I believe, with a certain amount of difference to this session last week. The reason for that difference is obvious. In the previous session we took the decision to bring about a uniformity in the mode of celebrating the Divine Liturgy by 3rd July 2000. For reasons that were explained during the sittings not all of us could implement the decision. Those of us who could implement the decision in their eparchies certainly deserve praise. I appreciate very much their sense of sacrifice in parting with the ideas that they had been holding and their commitment in this matter. I am sure that their faithful will support them wholeheartedly by firmly adhering to the decision. At the same time I can very well understand the predicament in which those who could not implement the synodal decision find themselves because I too am in the same situation. I am grateful to all of you for your empathy towards us. It has been very noble of you. At this juncture I wish to reiterate my ardent desire to see a uniform mode of celebrating the Divine Liturgy implemented everywhere in our Church. God willing, we will be able to see that day sooner or later.

As I told you in the course of this session the past two weeks had been a time in which the synod once again experienced its unity that was affirmed in the last session by taking the decision. We might well remember that none of us disowned the decision taken by the synod. That shows that there is unity in the synod. Now we have to continue to work together with this sense of unity [...].

Mount St. Thomas, 22 July 2000,

Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil c.Ss. R., Major Archbishop.

8. Conclusion: Implementation of the Unanimous Decision in the Successive Years (2001-2018)

The synod of bishops held from 10 to 22 July 2000 upheld the decision concerning the uniform mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* and in the statement issued to the press it was declared: "Since the decision of the synod remains in vigour, all should take care to implement it, creating favourable circumstances".[11] The decision of the synod concerning the uniform celebration of *Qurbana* is universally valid also because it was confirmed by the Apostolic See. However, even 17 years after the unanimous decision, in those dioceses which failed to implement it on 3 July 2000, it has not yet been executed and no serious effort has known to have been taken for the same, in spite of frequent lamentations of some bishops in the synod, as is evident from a glance at the *Synodal News*, which publishes the acts and decisions of the synod.

As regards the mission centres and dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church outside its proper territory, the synod from 10 to 22 July 2000 declared: "It was also agreed by the bishops that in the mission centres in India and abroad they would all celebrate the Holy *Qurbana* according to the synodal decision".[12] A minimum pastoral prudence requires the uniform mode of celebration in mission territories in India and in the Syro-Malabar dioceses and parishes abroad, where priests, religious and faithful from different regions come together. If the priests originally from different dioceses and regions celebrate in various ways in those places this would create confusion among the Syro-Malabar faithful and wonderment among the Christians belonging to other Churches.

For the coordination of the pastoral care according to the heritage and traditions of the Syro-Malabar Church, the document *Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Migrants* approved by the synod, was promulgated by Major Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil on 23 January 2009. As regards the liturgical celebrations it states:

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[11] *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 21.

[12] *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 21.

> The Sacred Liturgy and the sacraments celebrated for our migrant communities shall always be the Syro-Malabar Liturgy using the approved texts and adhering to the rites and the mode of celebration approved by the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church.[13]

From what we have already seen "the mode of celebration approved by the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church" for the *Qurbana* is self evident and needs no explanation.

In the synod held from 17 to 28 August 2010 the question of the unity of the Church in relation to the uniform mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* was again discussed following a statement made by Jacob Angadiath, bishop of Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Chicago, on the basis of the problems he confronted in the diocese. Here the report of the discussion in the synod and first six points emerged on the question are presented:

> Bishop Jacob Angadiath presented to the Synod an appeal for uniformity in the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* and a common understanding about the structure of our churches as a prerequisite for unity in the Church and the practical difficulties he faced in his eparchy because of the diversity of thinking in these matters. There was an elaborate and fruitful discussion on this matter. The important points that came during the discussion are the following:
>
> 1. Unity can be achieved only through a slow process.
>
> 2. The decision of the Synod regarding the uniformity of celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* is still valid and the Bishops should try to implement it in their own eparchies.
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> 3. There should be continued education regarding this decision of the Synod in the eparchies where the decision could not be implemented.
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> 4. The Guidelines for Pastoral Care has given clear directive regarding the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* in the Syro-Malabar communities outside the Syro-Malabar eparchies and we should see this directive is strictly observed by all.

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[13] *Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Migrants*, no. 12, in *Synodal News*, vol. 17, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2009) 115; also in *Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 146.

5. The text of the sacraments should be implemented in all the eparchies of the Church.

6. The liturgical texts promulgated by the Major Archbishop should be used as such for the liturgical celebrations in the Church.[14]

The uniform of mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* in the noncompliant dioceses inside the territory seems to have practically escaped the attention of the synod, but as regards the dioceses outside the proper territory the question was often debated. In the synod of 17-27 August 2011 Bishop Jacob Angadiath explained "the need of our coming to an agreement to implement the uniform mode of celebrating the *Qurbana* and other sacraments".[15] Bishop Vijay Anand Nedumpuram CMI told the Bishops that "if we can put into practice the previous decision of the synod on the uniform mode of celebration of the *Qurbana* in this year dedicated for mission, it will be a great achievement for our Church".[16] These statements demonstrate that even outside the proper territory the decision of the synod was not fully implemented after a period of ten years.

Bishop Vijay Anand Nedumpuram CMI raised the same question also in the synod of 9-13 January 2012. In the report of the synod the following information can be found:

> The Major Archbishop was of opinion that we need not enter into a detailed discussion on the matter. However he exhorted the members of the Synod that 1. We should strive to implement the decision of the Synod regarding uniform mode of celebration in the migrant communities outside the proper territory; 2. We have to be models in our liturgical celebrations, without omitting the prayers of the Anaphora; 3. We shall strive to use bema, incense and other essential elements in the celebration of the *Qurbana* on Sundays and solemn occasions.[17]

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[14] *Synodal News*, vol. 18, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2010) 67-68.

[15] *Synodal News*, vol. 19, nos. 1-3 (December 2011) 91.

[16] *Synodal News*, vol. 19, nos. 1-3 (December 2011) 91.

[17] *Synodal News*, vol. 20, nos. 1-3 (December 2012) 23-24. After the demise of Cardinal Mar Varkey Vithayathil, on 24 May 2011 the Synod elected Mar George Alencherry as the third major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. He was enthroned as major archbishop on 29 May 2011.

The reports in the *Synodal News* do not attest any further discussion on the theme. The decision of the synod concerning the uniform mode of celebrating Holy *Qurbana* outside the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church is always upheld in principle, although not fully implemented.[18] However, in recent years more efforts have been made to implement the synodal decision in extraterritorial eparchies and parishes with some positive results. However, the same cannot be affirmed with regard to those eparchies inside the proper territory, which originally did not implement the synodal decision on 3 July 2000.

[18] When Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* is celebrated according to the synodal decision in Italy and other European countries even today some express astonishment, stating that they have never seen such a celebration. Moreover, with some exceptions, unless they are explicitly told, even the religious sisters arrange the altars in such a way that the celebration according to the synodal decision becomes impossible.

Article Seven

INCULTURATION IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH: SOME THEOLOGICAL AND LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

Introduction

Inculturation is the ongoing and never-ending process of incarnating the sublime and transcendental mysteries of the Christian faith in different cultures employing the languages, symbols, signs, gestures, traditions, customs and philosophical categories of the native people, but without any watering down of the essentials of the faith. Since in this borderless world of globalization, different cultures are in a constant and dynamic process of interaction and growth, even in those countries, where the Christian faith has permeated and impregnated the culture for a long time, updating and renewal are inevitable. In countries like India, where the initial radical penetration of the Gospel and the consequent transformation and ennoblement of the culture have not taken place, inculturation of the liturgy is a very intricate and arduous task. Considering this fact, the present article highlights and sets forth some basic principles, which may guide the endeavours to inculturate the Syro-Malabar liturgy in India. One may keep in mind that there are several areas of real indianization, which can be effected without making any change in the divine public worship of the Syro-Malabar Church.[1] Although the prime concern of this article is the Syro-Malabar Church, the principles enunciated here are applicable to other Churches as well.

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[1] In fact in one of my articles I advanced twenty-seven proposals (in no way exhaustive) for real inculturation in the Syro-Malabar Church without touching the divine public worship. See P. Pallath, "The Syro-Malabar Church and Inculturation", 166-175.

1. Redemptive Incarnation as the Archetype of Inculturation

The core of the incomprehensible and inexhaustible mystery of the incarnation consists in the fact that the eternal *Logos*, who was with God and who was God, became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1, 1-14). The Son of God became consubstantial with man, while remaining consubstantial with the Father. The Fathers assembled in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 unanimously taught,

> the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity, like us in all respects except for sin [...].[2]

The mystery of incarnation does not mean the annihilation of the divinity in the humanity or the dissolution of the humanity in the divinity. It has always been a basic tenet of the Christian faith that Jesus is completely God and completely man; the Divine sonship of Jesus does not mean that Jesus is half God, half man. The conception of Jesus means, not that a new God-the-Son comes into being, but that God as Son in the man Jesus draws the creature man to himself, so that he himself is man.[3] As Walter Kasper affirms, "in Jesus Christ, God himself has entered into a human history, and meets us there in a fully and humbly human way".[4] In brief, incarnation is the inseparable and perfect union of God and man in one and the same Lord Jesus Christ without any confusion, division or separation.

The purpose of the incarnation is the redemption of man together with the whole of creation, which Christ wrought by his vicarious suffering, ignominious death and glorious resurrection. As the Fathers of the Church like Saints Ireneus and Athanasius

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[2] Profession of Faith in the Council of Chalcedon (451), *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no. 301, Eng. tr. in N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 86.

[3] Cf. J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco 2004, 274-275.

[4] W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, Burns & Oates 1985, 238.

stated, God became man in order that man might become god.[5] In Jesus through his unity of person with the *Logos* the human personality comes to its absolutely unique and utmost fulfilment.[6] The Second Vatican Council beautifully presents the ennoblement and perfection of humanity brought about by incarnation:

> He who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1, 15) is the perfect human being who has restored to the offspring of Adam the divine likeness which had been deformed since the first sin. Since the human nature which was assumed in him was not thereby destroyed, it was by that fact raised to a surpassing dignity in us also. For by his incarnation the Son of God united himself in some sense with every human being [...].[7]

Explaining the human dimension of the mystery of redemption Saint John Paul II declares that "in this dimension man finds again greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity" and that "in Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence".[8] In the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*, the priestly prayer after the Institution Narrative spotlights clearly the purpose of incarnation:

> [...] You, O Lord, put on our humanity in order to vivify it by your divinity and have exalted our low state, raised us who are fallen, vivified our mortality, forgiven our debts, justified us in our sinfulness and enlightened our minds. O God, you have condemned our enemies and granted victory to our weak and frail nature, in the overflowing mercies of your grace.[9]

From what we have already seen, it is abundantly clear that the Word became flesh in order to redeem man from the slavery of sin

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[5] Ireneus, *Adversus Hereses, Patrologia Graeca* 7, 1120; *Athanasius, De Incarnatione Verbi, Patrologia Graeca* 25, 192B.

[6] Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 248.

[7] Vatican II, *Gaudium et et Spes*, no. 20; *AAS* 58 (1966) 1042-1043.

[8] Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, Vatican City 1979, nos. 10-11.

[9] *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana, The Order of Raza* (1989), 42 (language modified).

and death as well as to accomplish the reunion of humanity with the Divinity. In Christ humanity received its perfection, fulfilment, ennoblement and divinization.

If we consider the mystery of redemptive incarnation as the paradigmatic principle of inculturation, it also implies the double process of kenosis and enrichment, death and resurrection, descent to Sheol and ascent to Heaven. Prof. M. Dhavamony explains the real significance of the "incarnation of Gospel" in various cultures as follows:

> The mystery of the redemptive incarnation is the primary motive and exemplary model for a true inculturation of the Gospel. Just as the Son of God assumed human nature in order to redeem it, so also the Gospel has to become incarnate in culture in a vital and intimate way in order to transform it and to save it. Christ wrought the salvation of humankind through his death and resurrection. Hence the paschal mysteries, the Cross and the Resurrection, are an essential part of the process of inculturation. As in the case of every individual, so also each culture, in order to be assumed in Christ, must share in his death and resurrection, thereby becoming purified, transformed and perfected by the Gospel [...].10

Just as the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God is the redemption and divinization of man, the aim of the "incarnation of the Gospel" in the various cultures is the elevation, ennoblement and redemption of these cultures in Jesus Christ, but without jeopardizing their authentic identity and individuality as well as the perennial values enshrined in the philosophy, art, language, literature, lifestyle, customs and traditions of the peoples, which the Church fully respects and integrates into itself. Saint John Paul II confirms: "In the process of encountering the world's different cultures, the Church not only transmits her truths and values and renews cultures from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them".[11] This double process of inculturation is also well explained by the International Theological Commission in the following definition:

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[10] M. Dhavamony, *Christian Theology of Inculturation* (*Documenta Missionalia* 24), Roma 1997, 94.

[11] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Vatican City 1999, no. 21.

> The process of inculturation may be defined as the Church's efforts to make the message of Christ penetrate a given sociocultural milieu, calling on the latter to grow according to all its particular values, as long as these are compatible with the Gospel. The term *inculturation* includes the notion of growth, of the mutual enrichment of persons and groups, rendered possible by the encounter of the Gospel with a social milieu. 'Inculturation [is] the incarnation of the Gospel in native cultures and also the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church'.[12]

According to the principle of incarnation the Indian cultures also need redemption, perfection and purification. Indian cultures must die to all that is not worthy of humanity in their traditions, to all that is evil, sin and social injustice in order to become liberated and redeemed and to obtain a true Christian meaning, orientation and fulfilment.[13] Before such a redemptive incarnation of the Gospel in the Indian cultures and their consequent Christianization and transformation, it is not appropriate to introduce into the public worship of the Church concepts and practices, whose content and significance are uncertain.

Christian missionaries and subsequently Hindu reformers have been striving to obliterate from Indian soil superstitious and inhuman practices which have tormented Indian society, such as human sacrifices, infanticide (especially of the female child), *sathi* (self immolation of the wife in the funeral pyre of the husband), the caste system, untouchability etc., but without complete success. The Hindu social order, consecrated by the Hindu scriptures, which divides the people into high castes, low castes and outcasts, is the very negation of the basic principles of equality, fraternity and freedom, guaranteed by the Constitution of India, but not yet fully implemented. Superstitious practices, animal worship, the cult of idols and natural forces, Brahmin supremacy, exploitation and marginalization of the outcasts, untouchables, tribals and women, communal, ethnic and linguistic discriminations are only examples of the evils still prevalent in Indian culture, which are incompatible

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[12] International Theological Commission, *Faith and Inculturation*, Vatican City 1988, no. I, 11; the citation in the last part is from John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, no. 21; the full text was published in *Origins* 18 (4 May 1989) 800-807.

[13] Cf. S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life*, 30.

with the gospel message and Christian faith.[14] In short, the inculturation of the liturgy must be followed by a profound Christianization, thorough renewal and radical transformation of Indian culture, which is a gradual and ongoing process that demands much time and energy.

2. Inculturation Based on Sound Doctrine for Guaranteeing the Catholicity of the Church

This principle follows from the doctrine of incarnation itself. Though Christ, the eternal and preexistent *Logos* became consubstantial with man, he always remained "the Son of God, the only begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father [...]".[15] The divine humiliation, the *kenosis*, was not an impoverishment of the deity, but an ineffable descent of the Son who is reduced to the 'form of a slave' without ceasing to be fully God.[16]

In the same way the deposit of faith enshrined in Sacred Scriptures and Tradition maintains its essential content, substantial unity, full integrity and specific identity while being incarnated in various cultures. Inculturation means only the expression of the one and same faith using the philosophical and theological categories as well as languages and symbols comprehensible to the people of a specific culture, but not the alteration or commutation of the faith itself.

Since liturgy is the epiphany, crystallization and celebration of the faith of the Church, it should be based on orthodox doctrine, especially on sound christology, pneumatology, soteriology, sacramentology and ecclesiology. This is necessary to ensure the

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[14] Cf. A. D. Mattam, *Inculturation of the Liturgy in the Indian Context*, Kottayam 1991, 91-96.

[15] The profession of faith of the Council of Nicaea (325), *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no. 125, Eng. tr. in N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 5.

[16] St Maximus, *De ambiguis*, *Patrologia Graeca* 91, 1044BC, 1048C; V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, New York 1976, 148.

orthodoxy of worship: that is to say, not only to avoid errors, but also to pass on the faith in its integrity to future generations.[17] Saint John Paul II explicitly states: "In every case inculturation must be guided by compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the faith of the universal Church, in full compliance with the Church's Tradition and with a view to strengthening people's faith. The test of true inculturation is whether people become more committed to their Christian faith because they perceive it more clearly with the eyes of their own culture".[18] On the relationship between faith and liturgy the Congregation for the Oriental Churches affirms:

> Liturgical prayer certainly conforms and perfectly expresses the authentic deposit of faith, according to the ancient expression of the *Indiculus: legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, commonly synthesized as *lex orandi lex credendi*. The Church, therefore, understands herself in depth precisely starting from her nature as a celebrating assembly. In this sense, it should not be forgotten that, if the Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church to the point of becoming the criterion of conformity for the same right doctrine, as Ireneus of Lyon reminds us: "Our thought is in full accord with the Eucharist and Eucharist, in its turn, confirms our thought".[19]

Such an inseparable and inherent relationship between faith and worship necessitates that the inculturation of the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church should be based on sound Catholic faith enshrined in Sacred Scriptures, Tradition and the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

The basic doctrines of Hinduism regarding God (a hotchpotch of polytheism, monism, pantheism, monotheism, atheism and dualism), incarnation, the universe and its creation, man and his salvation, history, sin, etc., which are disparate and even

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[17] Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, IV Instruction for the Right Application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy (nn. 37-40), Rome 1994, n. 27.

[18] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 22.

[19] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 32.

contradictory in different Hindu philosophical systems themselves, do not find many striking parallels in Christianity.[20] Such doctrines of dubious character cannot be directly introduced into the divine public worship of the Church, which is the common heritage of the whole Church, unless and until their content has been reinterpreted and their authenticity and compatibility with the Christian faith have been proved beyond doubt through an ongoing and long process of theologization. One has to remember also that the content of Christian liturgy is the economy of salvation, culminated in the Christ event, namely in the birth, suffering, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit. Since these mysteries of salvation are expounded and proclaimed only in the Christian Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, no Christian liturgy can be formed from the Hindu scriptures or from the sacred writings of any other religion.

The inculturation of the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church should be based on sound faith in order that it may remain within the Catholic communion. All twenty-three Churches which together form the Catholic communion have the same faith and morals, despite the legitimate pluralism of theological expressions and the variety of liturgical rites.[21] Since the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church expresses and celebrates the one faith professed by all and, being the heritage of the whole Church, it cannot proceed to a thorough inculturation of its liturgy in isolation from the universal communion of Churches.[22] Saint John Paul II has underlined the necessity of maintaining communion with the universal Church in the process of inculturation:

> Properly applied, inculturation must be guided by two principles: 'compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal

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[20] Cf. A. D. Mattam, *Inculturation of the Liturgy in the Indian Context*, 123-129; for a systematic presentation of Hindu doctrines regarding the points indicated above, see M. Dhavamony, *Classical Hinduism* (*Documenta Missionalia* 15), Rome 1982.

[21] Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, no. 23; *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, nos. 2-3. According to *Annuario Pontificio* 2017 there are 22 Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*; hence at present the Catholic Church is a communion of 23 Churches (including the Latin Church).

[22] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 22.

> Church'. Bishops, as guardians of the 'deposit of faith' will take care to ensure fidelity and, in particular, to provide discernment, for which a deeply balanced approach is required. In fact there is a risk of passing uncritically from a form of alienation from culture to an overestimation of culture. Since culture is a human creation and is therefore marked by sin, it too needs to be "healed, ennobled and perfected".[23]

Any Church which deviates from the faith enshrined in the Scriptures, witnessed by the apostles and the Fathers, defined by the ecumenical councils and taught by the Catholic Church, becomes less Catholic or ceases to be within the Catholic communion. Hence doctrinal syncretism and adulteration of faith are to be avoided in the efforts of inculturation.

3. The Holy Spirit: the Real and Active Agent of Inculturation

The theology of the incarnation naturally leads to the pneumatological aspect of inculturation. The Holy Spirit is the agent of the incarnation of the Son of God. The Spirit is God's love in person and the creative principle which enables Jesus to become incarnate. Not only the incarnation, but also the whole history and fate of Jesus took place in the Holy Spirit.[24]

The historical Jesus Christ "was conceived by the Holy Spirit" with the free consent and collaboration offered by humanity in the person of Mary. According to St John the Damascene, "the incarnation was accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit who caused the Virgin to be fit to receive the Deity of the Word, as well as through the Word Himself who formed in the Virginal flesh the first-fruits of His humanity".[25] Jesus Christ, baptized with the Holy Spirit, through his death and resurrection obtained the redemption of humankind always acting in the Spirit of God. In fact the entire life and activities of Jesus from birth to death and glorification was

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[23] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, Vatican City 1990, no. 54.

[24] Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 251.

[25] John the Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, III, 2, *Patrologia Graeca* 94, 985BC-988A; V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 141-142.

guided, inspired and permeated by the Holy Spirit.[26] The same Spirit continues to make present the paschal mysteries of Christ through Word and Sacraments for the redemption of humanity in every culture and at all times.

Fulfilling the promise of Christ (Acts 1, 8) the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples on the day of Pentecost to dwell permanently with them in the Church. On that day of the public inauguration of the Church the Holy Spirit, the agent of inculturation, made the "devoted men from every nation under heaven", namely people of different cultures, nationalities and languages hear the same salvific mysteries of God accomplished in Jesus Christ in a manner intelligible to them all (cf. Acts 2, 5-12). The International Theological Commission affirms:

> On Pentecost day, the breaking in of the Holy Spirit inaugurates the relation of the Christian faith and culture as fulfilment in flower: The promise of salvation fulfilled by the risen Christ filled the hearts of believers by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit himself. "The marvels of God" will from now on be "preached" to all men of every language and culture. [...] The Holy Spirit does not establish a superculture, but is the personal and vital principle which will vivify the new community in working in harness with its members.[27]

On the same day of Pentecost "about three thousand souls" were baptized and received the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (cf. Acts 2, 37-42). In fact, the first instance of inculturation is directly operated by the Holy Spirit.

When Christianity transcended the confines of Judaism due to the missionary activities of Paul and Barnabas, there arose the question as to whether the observation of Mosaic Law was necessary for salvation, and hence the non-Jewish people who embraced the Christian faith were to be obliged to keep the laws of Moses like circumcision. In the Council of Jerusalem, which was convoked to resolve this problem, the apostles and elders decided not to impose the Mosaic law on non-Jewish people who received

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[26] Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivficantem*, Vatican City 1986, nos. 15-24.

[27] International Theological Commission, *Faith and Inculturation* (1988), no. II, 23-24; *Origins* 18 (4 May 1989) 804.

baptism (Acts 15, 1-29). The synodal decree is presented as the common effort of the Holy Spirit and the Apostles: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15, 28). The Holy Spirit, the true agent of inculturation, prompted the apostles and elders to take the most important decision of all times regarding inculturation, which enabled the Christian faith to be incarnated in the different cultures of the world.

As in the redemptive incarnation (the archetype of inculturation) and in the apostolic Church, the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel (the deposit of faith) incarnate in various cultures, in a manner comprehensible to the people of those cultures.[28] The post synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* states:

> [...] the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia. The same Holy Spirit who leads us into the whole truth makes possible a fruitful dialogue with the cultural and religious values of different peoples, among whom he is present in some measure, giving men and women with a sincere heart the strength to overcome evil and the deceit of the Evil One, and indeed offering everyone the possibility of sharing in the paschal mystery in a manner known to God.[29]

The Holy Spirit who dwells in the Church and who continually sows the seeds of truth in the religious traditions, cultures and philosophies of India,[30] knows the ways and means to arrive at the incarnation of the Gospel on Indian soil and to perfect the inculturation of the liturgy at the proper time.

Some experts and hierarchs, who consider themselves the protagonists of indianization, think that the inculturation of the Syro-Malabar liturgy is their monopoly, which should be completed during their lifetime. Instead of being instruments of the Holy Spirit, they propose themselves as lords and patrons, who seem to dominate and manipulate even the liturgy. St John Paul II warns against the laboratorial production of inculturation by experts:

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[28] Cf. M. Dhavamony, *Christian Theology of Inculturation*, 105-109.

[29] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 21.

[30] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 15.

> In effect, inculturation must involve the whole people of God, and not just a few experts, since the people reflect the authentic *sensus fidei* which must never be lost sight of. Inculturation needs to be guided and encouraged, but not forced, lest it give rise to negative reactions among Christians. It must be an expression of the community's life, one which must mature within the community itself, and not be exclusively the result of erudite research. The safeguarding of traditional values is the work of a mature faith.[31]

The protagonists of inculturation may not forget that the Syro-Malabar Church existed from the very inception of Christianity and will continue until the second coming of the Lord. As all the Christian faithful who preceded them, this generation is also rendering valuable services to the Church and society. As instruments of the Holy Spirit, obviously the Christian faithful have their own important role and mission in the Church, even though nobody is indispensable. Therefore, all may humbly devote themselves to the *diakonia* of the Church, being conscious of the fact that even after their time the Church will continue. The prime duty of any Christian faithful, especially those who are in authority, is to preserve, enhance, live and hand over the deposit of faith, which St Thomas the Apostle bequeathed to this Church, to the coming generations without contamination and adulteration.

4. Inculturation Founded on the Basic Liturgical Tradition

The actualisation of the *Mysterium salutis* in space-time, which was initiated with the call of Abraham and which reached its culmination in the Christ event: the incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, took place on Asian soil. Saint John Paul II rightly affirms:

> The Church in Asia sings the praises of the 'God of salvation' (*Ps* 68:20) for choosing to initiate his saving plan on Asian soil, through men and women of that continent. It was in fact in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning. [...] Because Jesus was born, lived, died and rose from the dead in

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[31] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 54.

> the Holy Land, that small portion of Western Asia became a land of promise and hope for all mankind.[32]

Jesus Christ, our Lord, whom all Christians invoke as the Redeemer of man and hope of the world is also the *Orientale lumen*, which has illumined the universal Church.[33] In fact, the flesh which Christ assumed from the Virgin Mary and unified with the Divinity at the time of the incarnation is specifically Asian. In fact, Jesus Christ took flesh as an Asian and Oriental.[34]

Christianity originated as an Eastern Asian religion and hence the Church of Christ had its inception in Asia. In fact, the Church, the Kingdom of God, was brought into being by the paschal mysteries of Christ: the suffering, death, resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit,[35] which took place in Asia. The Asian Church in Jerusalem, the members of which were the Virgin Mary, the apostles, the disciples, the pious women who accompanied Jesus during his earthly ministry and all those who had accepted Christ and his teaching from the day of Pentecost, is the mother, model and inspiration of all other Churches and ecclesial communities throughout the world. The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ existed in the beginning only as the "Church of Jerusalem" in Asia, from whence the apostles and disciples of Jesus, who were all Orientals, after they had received the Holy Spirit, went forth to disseminate the Christian faith everywhere in the world. Thus from Jerusalem, from the mother of all Churches, the Gospel was spread to Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, India and to all nations.[36] The gospels manifest the Eastern and Asian mentality and spirit. As the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* states: "the narrative styles found in many books of the Bible have an affinity with the religious texts

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[32] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 1.

[33] John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen*, Vatican City 1995, no. 1.

[34] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, nos. 1 & 20; Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen*, nos. 1-2.

[35] Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, nos. 3-4.

[36] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen*, no. 2; Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 9.

typical of Asia".[37] In short Christianity is originally one of the Asian religions in harmony with the other religious traditions, socio-cultural life, as well as philosophy and wisdom of the Asian people though later it was imported to the West and then exported to different parts of the World as a "Western religion".

According to the vigorous, living and constant Indian tradition, the Apostle Thomas, who confirmed his faith in the Risen Lord proclaiming "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20: 28) reached India in the middle of the first century and disseminated the Christian faith in South India. Thus the pure "Asian Christian faith", sealed by the blood of the Apostle who embraced martyrdom on 3 July 72 AD at Mylapore in Tamilnadu, had the opportunity to grow on Asian soil itself, in interaction with the Indian culture.

In accordance with the command of the Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 12, 19) St Thomas also might have celebrated the eucharistic liturgy in India as it existed at that time. Christ instituted the Eucharist during the Last Supper in the context of Jewish liturgy. Following faithfully the action of Jesus in the "upper room" the apostles and disciples together with the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem celebrated "the supper of the Lord" (I Cor 11, 20) or the "breaking of the bread" (Acts 2, 42), the memorial of the salvific paschal mysteries of Jesus in the context of the Jewish liturgy. The last supper of the Lord was the essential model and the fundamental structure of this Eucharistic celebration.[38] With regard to this primitive Jerusalem liturgy the Congregation for Divine Worship states:

> In gathering together to break the bread on the first day of the week, which became the day of the Lord (cf. *Acts* 20, 7; *Ap.* 1, 10), the first Christian communities followed the command of Jesus who, in the context of the memorial of the Jewish pasch, instituted the memorial of his Passion. In continuity with the unique history of salvation, they spontaneously took the forms and texts of Jewish

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[37] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 22.

[38] For details, cf. A.G. Matrimot, *The Church at Prayer, Vol. 1: Principles of the Liturgy*, Collgeville 1986, 23-26; G. Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy*, London 1964, 36-102.

> worship, and adapted them to express the radical newness of Christian worship. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discernment was exercised between what could be kept and what was to be discarded of the Jewish heritage of worship.[39]

The worshipping assemblies of the faithful in the apostolic period could not but have reflected the liturgical praxis of the first Christian community in Jerusalem both for the eucharistic synaxis and for any community prayer. In brief, the Christian liturgy of the apostolic period was substantially the liturgy of Jerusalem.

Although no historical documents are available concerning the liturgy in India in the first centuries, one might reasonably assume that St Thomas had celebrated the primitive liturgy (the only one existing at that time) as all the apostles and the first Christians did at Jerusalem. "As regards the Eucharist, 'the breaking of bread', Thomas must have acted in the same manner as Christ did at the Last Supper and as Thomas along with the other apostles and the Jewish nucleus of the new Church celebrated his memorial in Jerusalem [...]".[40]

According to the patristic tradition, the Churches of Mesopotamia or the Persian Empire were evangelized by Mar Addai and Mar Mari, disciples of St Thomas. It is even believed that St Thomas himself preached in Persia proper (Iran). Thus the commercial, cultural and linguistic relationship as well as the mutual collaboration and harmony that existed between India and Persia from the pre-Christian era were ratified and reinforced by the new spiritual bond effected by the filial veneration of the Churches in these countries towards the Apostle Thomas. Naturally Thomas and his disciples must have introduced the same 'apostolic liturgy' wherever they evangelized and disseminated the Christian faith. Therefore, the Church of St Thomas Christians in India together with the other Thomistic Churches possessed the same Thomistic liturgical nucleus and spiritual heritage.

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[39] Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, no. 15.

[40] A. D. Mattam, "The Liturgy St Thomas Introduced in India and Its Development", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol. LIX (1995) 31; *Forgotten East: Mission, Liturgy and Spirituality of the Eastern Churches*, Satna 2001, 151.

Christian liturgies gradually developed into full-fledged and well-defined liturgical traditions, having their own distinct and specific identity and formulas of prayer, only in the great Christian centres such as Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Edessa (later Nisibis), Constantinople, and, there too, only after a long and complex historical process. Those Churches which did not develop proper liturgies spontaneously received them from other Churches.[41] Thus, for example, many peoples throughout the world have received the Roman liturgy, while thirteen Eastern Catholic Churches and more than thirty Orthodox Churches celebrate the liturgy of St John Chrysostom and St Basil according to the tradition of Constantinople.

Among the Thomistic Churches, Edessa (later Nisibis) was a stronghold of Christianity and a famous theologico-liturgical centre that produced many saintly Fathers, theologians and monks, as well as the matrix of a rich ecclesial tradition, later denominated the East Syrian tradition.[42] In contrast, the Church of St Thomas Christians in India, in the beginning a "pusillus grex" living in the midst of a non-Christian multitude, had neither theological centres, nor Fathers and saints, nor organized monastic life, nor eminent Christian writers, spiritual masters or theologians. In these circumstances they could not have perfected the liturgy bequeathed to them by their Apostle Thomas.[43]

Consequently, the St Thomas Christians spontaneously received and organically assimilated into their Thomistic liturgical nucleus the liturgical developments that were taking place in their sister Thomistic Churches. Thus, the East Syrian tradition, the

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[41] Cf. R. Taft, "The Missionary Effort of the East Syrian Churches as an Example of Inculturation", in Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali, *Le Chiese Orientali e la Missione in Asia*, Città del Vaticano 1998, 37-38; A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, vol. 1, 27-43; P. Maniyattu, "Foreign Interventions in the Liturgical Traditions", in P. Pallath (ed.), *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994, 178-186.

[42] A. D. Mattam, *Forgotten East*, 119-134; S. Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq*, Herefordshire 2010, 51-56; K. E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, New York 1989, 5-28.

[43] There is no evidence to show that the St Thomas Christians had developed a liturgy in any Indian language.

fruition of the "pure original Asian Christianity" on Asian soil itself without being much influenced by the Western or the Hellenistic culture, gradually became the common heritage of all the Thomistic Churches. It goes without saying that the St Thomas Christians in India did not depend on other Thomistic Churches for their original Thomistic liturgical nucleus, but only for its perfection and organic development.

The Indian Church on the one hand spontaneously received, adapted and integrated many liturgical and canonical institutions of the Chaldean Church, because they were congruent with her own original Thomistic heritage and Indian culture; and on the other hand it "inculturated" and Christianized fasts, feasts, socio-cultural customs, temple architecture as well as other Hindu rites which were compatible with the Catholic faith. In brief, although those who accepted Christ and his Gospel due to the apostolate of St Thomas changed their original faith, they continued to live the same socio-cultural life of the people in South India so much so that they were "Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in Worship".[44] Hence the Christian tradition of the St Thomas Christians was considered as one of the religions of India by political and religious leaders. It would be very harmful to the Syro-Malabar Church if anybody strove to project its rite as foreign, especially in the current epoch of the insurgence of Hindu fundamentalism.

From what we have seen it is evident that the basic liturgical tradition of the Church of St Thomas Christians was the East Syrian or Chaldean tradition. Their liturgical language was Syriac, a form of Aramaic, namely the language of Our Lord, in which, as these Christians were certain, St Thomas had celebrated the sacraments of initiation in India and bequeathed to them other rites and prayers. A letter written by three lay Christian leaders to Pope Gregory XIII in 1578 expresses the self-awareness of the St Thomas Christians concerning their liturgy:

> O, Supreme Pastor of all the faithful of Christ our God, we, your unworthy and sinful sons of India, inform Your Charity that we

[44] See, P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", 82-104.

> have been Christians from the time of Saint Thomas, a disciple of Our Lord. Thus we have become sharers of the Baptism, sacraments and the Body of Our Lord. Our prayers are in Syriac or the Chaldean language, which has been handed on to us by our Lord St Thomas, and we and our predecessors have been taught this language. Our bishops and archbishops have always been sent to us from among the Assyrians of the East, and the ordination to the priesthood and to the diaconate has been conferred on us by them.[45]

The St Thomas Christians were fully convinced that their Syriac liturgy came directly from St Thomas and not from the Babylonian or Assyrian Church. As mentioned above, the Indian Christians depended on their sister Churches only for the organic development of their liturgy. Thomas Paremmakkal (1736-1799), in responding to the missionaries who sent accusations to Rome against the St Thomas Christians, manifested the conviction of these Christians concerning their rite:

> We are Syrians. From the time the Apostle Thomas was in our country and gave us the treasure of the holy faith, we have been, until today, without any break, performing our ecclesiastical ceremonies and practices in the Syriac rite. Your predecessors tried their best to change this ancient rite of ours. But they realized they could not.[46]

The Congregation for the Oriental Churches rightly affirms: "According to a venerated tradition, the Apostle Thomas was sent to proclaim the Gospel, and the St Thomas Christians became members of the large family of the Syro-Oriental Churches, one of the five ancient Oriental traditions, which continue to exist to this day (CCEO c. 28 § 2). To this faith, these traditions, the fathers of the Syro-Malabar Church remained faithful".[47]

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[45] S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*, Romae 1902, 85.

[46] T. Paremmakkal, *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 247. The expression "Syrians" simply signifies those who use the Syriac liturgy. Since the liturgical language of the St Thomas Christians was Syriac, they were often called Syrians or *Suriani* (Catholics).

[47] Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, "Fundamental Orientations concerning the Syro-Malabar Liturgy" (Prot. N. 200/93, 16 March 1998), no. II, 2; *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 14.

In fact the St Thomas Christians lived their faith according to their basic tradition with great devotion and marvellous concord until the arrival of the Western missionaries in the sixteenth century. In spite of the westernization of the liturgy and spiritual life of the St Thomas Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church during the four succeeding centuries, the basic ecclesial tradition was not completely replaced or uprooted, although it remained in a hybrid state.

In the document entitled the "Report on the State of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church" forwarded to all the hierarchs of this Church on 12 August 1980, the Holy See once more categorically confirmed its long standing position:

> The liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church must remain completely faithful to the traditional Syro-Oriental liturgy, especially in the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. There is no need of introducing any change in the liturgical rite unless a proper organic development demands it.[48]

With the approval and publication of the typical edition of the Syro-Malabar Pontifical, Missal, Ritual and other minor liturgical books after profound study and the production of abundant documentation, it is all the more evident that the East Syrian tradition is the basic ecclesial tradition from which the Syro-Malabar rite originated and therefore it is a useless squandering of time to discuss this matter further. Since the basic ecclesial tradition of the Syro-Malabar rite is the East Syrian tradition, any adaptation, renewal or inculturation must be actuated in harmony with the liturgical, theological and spiritual identity of this tradition. This principle demands that hybridisms from other liturgies and syncretism from other religions which are not congruent with the spirit of East Syrian tradition are to be avoided in the process of reform, renewal and inculturation.

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[48] *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 15.

5. Inculturation as Organic Growth from the Basic Tradition

The inculturation of liturgy is not the indiscriminate interpolation of elements from other religions; it is the result of the spontaneous interaction and encounter of the liturgical tradition with the culture and religious ethos of the autochthonous people. From the very beginning of Christianity organic development was considered as the basic law of liturgy. In fact Christian liturgy itself organically grew out of the Jewish heritage. As regards this point Joseph Ratzinger is categorical and explicit:

> [...] at all times and in all religions, the fundamental law of liturgy has been the law of organic growth within the universality of the common tradition. Even in the huge transition from the Old to the New Testament, the rule was not breached, the continuity of liturgical development was not interrupted: Jesus introduced his words at the Last Supper organically into the Jewish liturgy at the point where it was opened to them, as it were, waiting for them. The growing Church carefully continued this process of inwardly deepening, purifying and expanding the Old Testament inheritance. Neither the apostles nor their successors "made" a Christian liturgy; it grew organically as a result of the Christian reading of the Jewish inheritance, fashioning its own form as it did so.[49]

However, this basic law of liturgy was obfuscated in the Middle Ages, especially after the Council of Trent, when the Western missionaries, forcefully introduced Western liturgical and cultural elements into Eastern Catholic liturgies, disfiguring their original forms and endangering their individuality.

Thanks to the Second Vatican Council this basic principle of liturgical progress has also been re-established. The constitution of the Second Vatican Council on the Sacred Liturgy, stressing the need to preserve the healthy tradition and paving the way for a legitimate development, has established that

> changes should not be made unless a real and proven need of the Church requires them, and care should be taken to see that new

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[49] J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Feast of Faith*, 66-67.

> forms grow in some way organically out of the forms already existing.[50]

The Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, focusing on the need to preserve and observe their own rite, has reiterated the same principle:

> All Eastern Christians should know and be certain that they may and should always preserve their own lawful liturgical rites and way of life, and that changes should be made only by reason of their proper and organic development.[51]

Therefore the principle of organic growth is the universal criterion for determining the authenticity of inculturation, reforms and changes in the sacred liturgy in all the Churches, both in the West and in the East.

In every living organism there coexist the power of conservation, which enables one being to remain always the same being, maintaining its identity, individuality and all its particular characteristics, and the power of development, which permits the being to discard the dead material and to assimilate new elements into itself as a part of its growth and perfection.[52] Organic growth is always a gradual, natural and internal process, which cannot be effected by forceful external interventions or arbitrary impositions that only disfigure, mutilate and finally annihilate the being.

The liturgical tradition of every Church is like a living organism that should grow, develop and reach its perfection. Just as a living organism remains the same, retaining its own original identity, individuality, physiognomy and ontological nature, and does not become another being, in spite of various intrinsic and extrinsic changes of growth, the liturgical tradition of a Church should grow and develop spontaneously, discarding outmoded forms and aspects which are not essential and assimilating appropriate new elements from the culture, philosophy and traditions of the autochthonous people, in so far as they are compatible with the Catholic faith. Perhaps the best description of

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[50] Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 23.

[51] Vatican II, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no. 6.

[52] Cf. *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 53.

the process of organic growth with regard to liturgical traditions has been provided by Prof. Placid Podipara:

> The different types of liturgies, therefore, can and must grow like a living organism assimilating new elements and discarding outmoded forms and items, that are not instituted by Christ. Just as the growth of an organism is not its change, mutilation, or juxtaposition of foreign elements, but an unfolding of its innate vigour to assimilate outside elements eschewing all foreign or dead matter, so the types of liturgies in their further growth have to preserve their individuality, and have to assimilate to it appropriate new elements. [53]

If adaptation or borrowing takes place, the things adapted or borrowed, are not to be juxtaposed, but digested and assimilated to the spirit of the liturgy that adapts or is adapted. Juxtaposition will destroy the very individuality of the liturgy, and consequently also its vitality for growth. The capacity for growth, by adaptation or borrowing, of a liturgy really depends on its individuality which supposes homogeneity and power of assimilation.[54]

Christian faithful and ecclesiastical authorities can intervene in this process of organic growth in order to stimulate and streamline the progress of their liturgical tradition, but great wisdom and disinterested discernment are required to avoid undue modifications and perilous dismemberment which lead to the annihilation of the individuality and specific characteristics of the tradition and its consequent impoverishment. Anything imposed from outside cannot be considered as part of organic growth, but only as mutilation or an intrusion of foreign elements.[55] As regards the manner of organic progress the Congregation for the Oriental Churches states:

> The organic progress, in every Church *sui iuris*, implies taking into account first of all the roots from which the heritage of these Churches was initially developed, mainly in Jerusalem, Alexandria,

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[53] P. J. Podipara, *Reflections on Liturgy*, in T. Kalayil (ed.), *Collected Works of Rev. Dr. Placid J. Podipara CMI*, vol. III, Mannanam 2007, 145.

[54] Cf. P. J. Podipara, *Reflections on Liturgy*, 145.

[55] Cf. P. Pallath "Introduction" to *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994, 4.

> Antioch, Constantinople, Armenia, and in the ancient empire of Persia; and secondly, the manner in which such traditions were transmitted, adapting to the various circumstances and places but maintained in a coherent, organic continuity.[56]

According to the spirit of Vatican II and the mind of the Oriental Congregation the principle of organic growth is a key criterion for evaluating the authenticity of inculturation and liturgical reform.

The principle of organic growth requires that in the process of inculturation only those elements which are coherent and consonant with the Syro-Malabar liturgical tradition can be adopted into it in such a way that they do not appear as an extraneous body forced into this liturgy, but a blossoming, as though spontaneously, from already existing forms.[57] Since at present the Syro-Malabar Church is an Eastern *sui iuris* Church, its rite, evolved from an Asian tradition consonant with Indian culture, has ample possibility of organic growth on Indian soil without impositions from outside, as happened in the last four hundred years.

6. Inculturation, Preserving the Unity of the Syro-Malabar Rite

Inculturation as an organic growth based on the basic tradition foresees the preservation of the theological, spiritual and structural identity and unity of the Syro-Malabar rite. In the process of inculturation elements that are not compatible with the genuine spirit and substantial unity of the Syro-Malabar rite cannot be introduced into it.[58] By the substantial unity of the Syro-Malabar rite we mean the unity as expressed in the typical editions of the liturgical books of the Syro-Malabar Church approved by the synod of bishops and published by the Major Archbishop after

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[56] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 12.

[57] Cf. Paul VI, Discourse of 18 March 1974, *Nuntia* 1 (1975) 6; Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 12.

[58] Cf. P. Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 68-69.

the prior review of the Apostolic See in accordance with canon 657 of the Eastern Code.

It goes without saying that no books, other than those approved and published by the aforementioned ecclesiastical authorities can be used for legitimate divine public worship. The celebrants, including bishops, can avail themselves of the options, alternative prayers, additions, omissions as well as gestures and postures permitted in the typical editions of the liturgical books, but they cannot add to or remove from the divine public worship of the Church anything on their own accord.[59]

The liturgical laws enacted by the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church and promulgated by the Major Archbishop have the force of law everywhere in the world.[60] Hence all those who celebrate the Syro-Malabar liturgy anywhere in the world are obliged to act according to the laws and regulations of the Syro-Malabar Church, using only approved liturgical books. The non-implementation of the synodal decisions on the liturgy threatens not only the unity of the rite, but also the unity of the Church itself.

The Roman rite is celebrated everywhere in the world maintaining its substantial unity as expressed in the typical editions of liturgical books, published by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, and in the official translations of liturgical books approved by the episcopal conferences for their areas and confirmed by the Apostolic See.[61] The Byzantine rite is celebrated by thirteen Eastern Catholic Churches and more than thirty Orthodox Churches dispersed throughout the world without altering its substantial unity and identity. Similarly the Syro-Malabar rite can be celebrated anywhere on the globe and in any language and culture without altering its substantial unity, spirit and structure, because the content of Christian liturgy is not culture, but the economy of salvation culminated in the Christ event, which is the same anywhere in the world. Culture is only a means for the

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[59] Cf. CCEO, canon 668 § 2.

[60] CCEO, canon 150 § 2.

[61] Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, no. 36.

manifestation and incarnation of the Christ event in a manner understandable to the people of various nations.

Real inculturation according to Catholic principles, which stems from the basic tradition as organic growth, without endangering the substantial unity of the rite, always maintains the identity and particular characteristic of the rite. Hence the three rites in India, according to the sound principles of inculturation never become one, as it was thought for sometimes, but always remain three, because each rite receives only those elements from Indian culture which are consonant with its own specific identity, theological traits and spiritual ethos.

7. Inculturation of Liturgy: Not the Beginning, but the Culmination

As soon as some Christian faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church hear the word "inculturation", they immediately think about making alterations or modifications in the divine public worship of the Church, especially in the eucharistic liturgy, or about inserting into the liturgy some elements from other religions. However it is evident that the inculturation of liturgy, the "source and summit" of Christian life should be the final stage of a gradual process of adaptation and contextualization.

In fact indianization of the socio-cultural life is more important because people lead the same cultural socio-political and economic life, but for divine worship each religious group goes to its own place of worship (church, temple or mosque). Inculturation must start with the adoption and development of items such as Indian life-style, Indian architecture of churches, Indian Christian art, Indian music and signing, Indian *sanyasa* and *ashram*, Indian names, Indian dress and ornaments, fasting and abstinence, pilgrimages, vegetarian meals, etc. They must be followed by inculturation of festivals, private and popular devotions, sacramentals and other paraliturgical celebrations. Such a global inculturation process from the grass roots will naturally result in the inculturation of the divine public worship of the Church as well.

Inculcation of Indian values is of prime importance. India is a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-racial country, but there are some perennial religious values which inextricably intertwine the varieties and coalesce into the Indian culture. A good way of inculturation is that the Christian faithful, especially bishops, priests and the members of religious institutes live Indian cultural and religious values such as, the profound longing for the Absolute; intense yearning for God experience and God realization; love of silence and contemplation; life of simplicity and harmony; renunciation and detachment; fasting, *tapas* and asceticism; non-violence, respect for life and compassion for all beings; love of and closeness to nature; filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors; a spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence (though threatened at present), etc.

Development of Indian Eastern spirituality is another important step towards an authentic inculturation process. The harmony and confluence that can be verified between Indian religious traditions and Eastern spirituality provide ample space for their fruitful interaction and evolution on Indian soil. The three classical ways of salvation and God realization such as the way of works (*Karma-marga*), the way of knowledge (*Jñana-marga*) and the way of devotion or love of God (*Bhakti-marga*) can be Christianized reinterpreting them in accordance with Christian scriptures and transforming them with Christian content. The values of selfless works, divine knowledge and fervent devotion present in the Gospel can be lived and expressed in a manner easily accessible to the Indian mind, using these Indian spiritual categories. Indian *Yoga* can be adopted as a physical exercise for the improvement of health and for psychological wellbeing, and as a preparation for Christian meditation by those Christian faithful who consider this method more helpful than the other ones for their concentration in Triune God and spiritual growth.[62] Similarly Hindu repetitive prayer methods such as the *mantra, japa,* hymns of praise *(stuti, stotra, stava)* as well as *kirtana and bhajana* which

[62] For a theological-critical consideration of the "baptism" of yoga, see J. Kallarangatt, *Windows to Heaven: Contours of an Ecclesial and Oriental Way of Life*, Kottayam 2018, 329-342; cf. also S. Vandanamthadathil, *Inculturation in Religious Life*, 95-98 & 276-280.

facilitate constant prayer and communion with God, can be christianized providing them with a Christian content.[63]

There is also the necessity to develop an Indian Eastern theology as a solid foundation for authentic inculturation. The single sacred deposit of faith enshrined in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, which progresses in the Church towards the fullness of God's truth under the assistance of the Holy Spirit, is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow.[64] Preserving intact the deposit of faith, proper freedom can be maintained in the theological elaborations of revealed truth.[65] By Indian Eastern theology we mean the systematic and reflective expression of the Christian faith as lived in the East, using Indian terms, concepts, symbols, images, thought patterns, wisdom, philosophy, as well as socio-cultural and historical traditions, but without altering or compromising its essential content and unity.[66] Hindu concepts can be introduced into the liturgy only after their authenticity and validity have been proved through a long and ongoing process of theological interaction, and after the approval of the synod of bishops and confirmation (prior review) of the Apostolic See has been obtained.

The translation of liturgical books into the languages, idioms and expressions of the native people is a significant measure of inculturation.[67] "Language and culture are inextricably intertwined, so that there is not the slightest possibility of successful, effective and permanent inculturation outside the language of the local

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[63] For more about Hindu prayer, M. Dhavamony, *Classical Hinduism*, 206-242.

[64] Cf. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, nos. 8-10.

[65] Cf. Vatican II, *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 4; *Ad gentes*, no. 22, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 62.

[66] For the difficulties involved in the formulation of an Indian theology, A. D. Mattam, "Christianity and Inculturation", *ETJ*, vol. 1 (1997) 64-67; *Forgotten East*, 258-262.

[67] Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 36, 54 & 63; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, no. 53.

culture".[68] "Language is crucial: ultimately, and with few exceptions, enduring inculturation occurs only when the Church adopts the language of the culture into which it is implanted".[69]

Until 2005 canonically approved typical edition in the vernacular for the entire Syro-Malabar Church existed only for the Eucharistic liturgy. For all other items only *ad experimentum* Malayalam texts without any canonical approval were used for liturgical celebrations. After the elevation of the Syro-Malabar Church to the major archiepiscopal status on 16 December 1992 much progress has been made with regard to the redaction, translation and publication of officially approved liturgical books in Malayalam and in some other Indian languages. Two Malayalam versions are still utilized for the Liturgy of the Hours in the Syro-Malabar Church: although the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference of the time (SMBC) published a Malayalam version, in some dioceses another text adapted by a private individual is being used (hence no typical edition for the whole Church).[70] Similarly official texts for different sacramentals, burial services and blessings have not been published.

In brief, inculturation of the liturgy, especially the *Qurbana* should be the culmination of a global and gradual process of adaptation which touches and transforms the whole of the life, mentality, thought pattern, *modus vivendi* and *agendi* of the people. The first step towards the inculturation of liturgy is to prepare and publish normative typical editions of all the liturgical books of the Syro-Malabar Church founded on the basic tradition and their standard official translations of real literary merit in various Indian languages. Once this has been done, the Syro-Malabar rite can grow and progress in the Indian culture, under the guidance of the synod of bishops, without any undue dependence on any other Church.

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[68] R. Taft, "The Missionary Effort of the East Syrian Churches", 32.

[69] R. Taft, "The Missionary Effort of the East Syrian Churches", 35.

[70] For details, Article Four, no. 6.

8. Real Inculturation - not Westernization

The camouflage of inculturation has been utilized for a long time either to maintain the Western practices imposed upon the Syro-Malabar Church during the three centuries of Latin jurisdiction (1599-1896) or to introduce new Western elements which have only alienated this Church both from the Eastern heritage and from the Indian genius and ethos. After the appointment of native bishops in 1896 and even after the constitution of Syro-Malabar hierarchy in 1923, attempts were not made to restore the original Syro-Malabar liturgy or to adapt it to Indian culture. The Syro-Malabar bishops unanimously decided to use the Roman Pontifical and to maintain the westernized liturgy. In spite of the hostile attitude of the Syro-Malabar bishops, the Syro-Oriental Pontifical and *Qurbana* were restored by the Roman Pontiffs and the Apostolic See, in accordance with its well-known policy of preserving and promoting Eastern liturgy and spiritual heritage.[71]

Even after such restoration by the Apostolic See, whatever was done in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy for a long time under the guise of indianization can be indicated as attempts to maintain or return to Western customs and practices, which were abandoned in the official liturgical books, published by the Apostolic See with papal approval. Even the Indian Mass prepared for the Latin Church in accordance with the structure and spirit of the Roman Missal was introduced into the Syro-Malabar Church with slight modifications. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches pointed out that such Indian liturgies "cannot be considered a reform or an organic development of the Syriac liturgies: in fact, they preserve neither the structure, nor the tone, nor the spirit".[72]

On 3 October 1981 Archbishop Joseph Parecattil, in his capacity as the president of the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference, forwarded to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches the text of the Order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-

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[71] For details, P. Pallath and J. Kollara, *Roman Pontifical into Syriac*; P. Pallath, *Restoration and Reform of Syro-Malabar Qurbana* (already cited).

[72] *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 21.

Malabar Church, finalized by the Bishops' Conference at its sessions on 1-2 June 1981. After due examination of the text through a special commission composed of highly qualified experts, the Congregation formulated its observations which were forwarded to the Syro-Malabar bishops on 1 March 1983. In this document the Congregation pointed out that the "[...] door was left open to substantial changes in the basic structure of the rites; and to innovations that are in no way "indianizations" but rather "latinizations", including superficial modern westernizations based on some of the worst aspects of current Western liturgical practice".[73]

The Congregation adds further that "Numerous latinizations are introduced, in spite of the constant efforts of the Holy See to restore this rite, and its constant explicit forbidding of latinization", such as the preference given to Latin terminology, mass *versus populum*, announcement of intention or theme in the beginning of the *Qurbana*, sign of the cross, improvised prayers, silent pauses, offertory procession of the faithful foreign to the whole Christian East, restructuring of the pre-anaphora rites according to Latin models, suppression of many Eastern elements in order to accommodate Western practices, use of Latin vestments, as well as "the '*reductionist*' tendency to limit and reduce and westernize as much as possible".[74] The Congregation reiterated the same also in the document entitled the *Final Judgement of the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches concerning the Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana* dated 24 July 1985.[75]

However, some of the aforementioned elements which were rejected as westernizations or latinizations not consonant with the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*, were permitted or rather tolerated as dispensations (with the explicit prohibition not to include them in the *Qurbana* text), options, alternatives or local customs in the

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[73] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Observations on: "The Order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-Malabar Church 1981"*, in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 60.

[74] Cf. *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 60-88.

[75] *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 96-114, see especially nos. 18, 19, 22, 39, 40.

document *Directives on the Order of Syro-Malabar Qurbana in Solemn and Simple Forms* promulgated by the Congregation on May 5 1988, because of the insistence of a group of bishops.[76] In the paper on the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church, presented in the Syro-Malabar synod held in Rome from 8 to 16 January 1996, suggestions are made to regularize and continue the Western elements already introduced into the *Qurbana*, but not even a single concrete proposal is found for inculturation or indianization.[77]

It is to be noted that the Western practices mentioned above were introduced into the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* under the guise of indianization, although they have nothing to do with the Indian ethos, but run contrary to Indian mentality and spirit. According to the mind of the Apostolic See, as an Eastern Church in India the Syro-Malabar Church needs today a double integration in: 1) an Eastern Christian and 2) an Indian direction. The Syro-Malabar Church has to regain its original Indo-Oriental identity, enriching itself with authentic Eastern spirituality and theology and inculturating authentic Indian values and traditions.[78] In brief, any further westernization of the Syro-Malabar liturgy, which still more estranges this Church from Indian culture, is to be carefully avoided. It is paradoxical that endeavours have been made to modify the pure Asian form of Christianity incarnated in the East Syrian tradition, consonant with the Indian culture, interpolating Western elements incompatible with the Indian religious ethos under the guise of inculturation.

Since at present the Syro-Malabar Church has become global, the question may arise whether it can become Western in the West. Obviously the Christian faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church should respect the constitution, civil law and socio-cultural values of the country, where they find themselves. Attempts shall not be

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[76] *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 126-140.

[77] Cf. J. Thoomkuzhy, "Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church: Problems and Prospects", in *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church,* Held in the Vatican from 8 to 16 January 1996 (edited by J. Porunnedam), Kochi 1996, 89-112.

[78] Cf. *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, 13 & 29.

made to globalize some of the negative elements of Indian culture such as the spirit of caste, ethnic and sexual discrimination as well as anti-evangelical practices and internal conflicts which are not part of the genuine ecclesial and spiritual heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church, but are contrary to authentic freedom, equal dignity of all human beings and universal fraternity and love, highly esteemed in the Western countries. The Syro-Malabar emigrants may remember that: "The Church, sacrament of unity, overcomes ideological or racial barriers and divisions and proclaims to all people and all cultures the need to strive for the truth in the perspective of correctly facing differences by dialogue and mutual acceptance. Different cultural identities are thus to open up to a universal way of understanding, not abandoning their own positive elements but putting them at the service of the whole of humanity".[79]

Obviously the Syro-Malabar Christian faithful who "decide to live with another people should strive to esteem the cultural patrimony of the nation that welcomes them, to contribute to its common good and to spread the faith especially by the example of Christian life".[80] They may adopt the socio-cultural life of the place, such as dress, education, profession, economic and financial activities, language and literature, food style, marriage customs and family structure, art and architecture of houses, national festivities etc., in so far as they are compatible with the faith and morals as practised by the Catholics in those countries. It is injustice to demand from children, born and brought up in Western countries, a life according to the Indian culture, which they do not know.

According to the principles enunciated in this article which correspond to the mind of the Catholic Church the Syro-Malabar liturgy should be celebrated anywhere in the world according to the approved liturgical books, maintaining the unity of the rite, in

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[79] Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi (The Love of Christ towards Migrants)*, Vatican City 2004, no. 34.

[80] Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, Juridical Pastoral Regulations, Art. 3 (page 68).

the manner of Roman and Byzantine rites. The liturgical books can be translated into any language and liturgy can be celebrated in the vernacular. Some other examples of adaptation of the Syro-Malabar Church in the West would be: the architecture of church-buildings (maintaining the internal structure), ecclesiastical art and music, liturgical utensils, sacred vestments without modifying its shape and spirit, feasts and religious festivals, celebration of betrothal and marriage, ceremonies related to funeral rites, etc.

9. Inculturation of Liturgy as the Competence of the Synod

In the formation of Christian traditions, the process of inculturation "has from the start been kept under strict control by the legitimate authorities of the Church. It is the Church, not the individual, that decides what is acceptable and what is to be rejected".[81] According to the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* the competent authority for regulating the inculturation of divine public worship of the Syro-Malabar Church is the synod of bishops, headed by the Major Archbishop.[82] Since the divine public worship is the patrimony of the entire Syro-Malabar Church, individual bishops, priests or members of religious institutes are not competent to introduce modifications or additions into the liturgy which are not foreseen in the approved typical edition of the liturgical books, published by the Major Archbishop after the approval of the synod of bishops and the prior review of the Apostolic See. Hence the only authority competent to approve inculturation in the Liturgy is the synod of bishops, which may do so only after serious studies and only after a consensus has been reached among the bishops.

The Eastern Code explicitly establishes the competence of individual bishops in the field of liturgy: "As the moderator, promoter and guardian of the entire liturgical life in the eparchy committed to him, the eparchial bishop must be vigilant that it be fostered to the utmost and be ordered according to the prescriptions

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[81] R. Taft, "The Missionary Effort of the East Syrian Churches", 35.

[82] Cf. CCEO, canons 657 & 668.

and lawful customs of his own Church *sui iuris*".[83] He himself must conduct the liturgical functions solemnly according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books.[84]

Similarly the protopresbytors, parish priests and rectors of sanctuaries have the obligation to see to it that the Divine Liturgy and the divine praises are celebrated according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books.[85] In this connection Saint John Paul II considered it his duty "to appeal urgently that the liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist be observed with great fidelity. These norms are a concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist; this is their deepest meaning. Liturgy is never anyone's private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated".[86]

The role of an individual eparchial bishop is limited to celebrate the liturgical functions according to the prescriptions of the approved liturgical books and legitimate customs of his own Church and to ensure that all others also do so in the eparchy committed to him. An individual eparchial bishop or even the Major Archbishop is not competent to introduce any new element into the divine public worship of the Church on the pretext of inculturation, but they can present their proposals to the synod of bishops for due consideration, discussion and eventual approval.

Since the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church preserves the *depositum fidei* as well as expresses and celebrates the one same faith professed by all and, being the heritage of the whole Church, it cannot be determined by the Syro-Malabar Church alone in an autonomous manner in isolation from the universal Church.[87] Hence for guaranteeing the orthodoxy and the unity of the faith in the liturgy a prior review by the Apostolic See is prescribed before

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[83] CCEO, canon 199.

[84] Cf. CCEO, canon 200.

[85] Cf. CCEO, canons 278 § 1, 289 § 2 and canon 309.

[86] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Vatican City 2003, no. 52.

[87] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 22; Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 24.

the publication of liturgical books.[88] This demands that the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, in its efforts of inculturation and adaptation, must take to heart the magisterium, guidelines and directives of the supreme authority of the Church, the guarantor and defender of the true faith and morals.

10. Inculturation and the Unity of the Syro-Malabar Church

The essence of Christianity consists in the supreme commandment of love and unity, by which even the disciples are to be recognized and by which Christ is to be known to the followers of other religions (cf. Jn 13: 31-35 & 15: 12, 17: 20-23; Lk 10: 27; Gal 5: 14; Rm: 13, 8-10). The very being of the Church is communion, namely communion of human persons with the triune God and communion with one another. The post synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* underscores the fact that the Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of the human person with God and to be the sacrament of the unity of the human race. Wherever communion is weakened the Church's witness and missionary work suffer.[89] Considering the prime importance of unity and communion in the Indian context of religious, cultural and racial pluralism on the first day of his visit to India in 1986 Pope John Paul II advised the bishops:

> At the very centre of all your pastoral solicitude, dear Bishops, is the Church's unity. In her unity we recognize the greatest of blessings, the desire of the Heart of Jesus, the expression of fidelity to the Lord, the sign of the credibility of his Church and the sign of the credibility of the very mission of Christ. In the unity of the Church we see the reason why Jesus died: "to gather into one the scattered children of God" (Jn 11: 52).[90]

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[88] Cf. CCEO, canon 657 § 1; Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 24.

[89] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, nos. 24 & 26.

[90] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 February 1986; P. Pallath, (ed.), *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church in India*, Rome 1996, 158, Indian edition, Changanacherry 1996, 158.

The Christian faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church are aware of the fact of how the arbitrary introduction of Western practices into the Syro-Malabar liturgical tradition even against the constant directives of the Holy See under the pretext of indianization destroyed the liturgical peace and harmony in this Church for several decades, dwindling its missionary dynamism and triggering grave indiscipline among some segments of the clergy, which provoked wonderment and dismay among the Christian faithful and grave scandal among the non-Christians. Since the preservation and consolidation of the unity of the Syro-Malabar Church is the most impelling necessity, everything which endangers communion and fellowship among the bishops, clergy, religious and other Christian faithful is to be avoided.

The Congregation for the Oriental Churches in its *Instruction* underlines the obligation of the bishops to avoid groups and fractions in the Church in connection with liturgical reform:

> In exercising his mandate as moderator of liturgical life, the Bishop should neither act arbitrarily nor give way to the behaviour of groups or factions, but, together with his clergy, let him be an attentive guardian of the liturgical awareness present and operating in the living memory of the people of God entrusted to him. Just as the *sensus fidelium* is determinant of the comprehension of the faith believed, so is it in the safeguarding of the faith celebrated.[91]

Since the inculturation of liturgy is not a necessity (especially in Kerala where the Indian culture is the outcome of the bimillenary interaction of Christianity with other religions), no new element may be introduced into the divine public worship of this Church, unless and until (after long study and prayer) a full consensus has been reached in the synod of bishops. Anything which disturbs or destroys the communion and the collegial spirit among the bishops, clergy and the Christian faithful may be extraneous to the Syro-Malabar Church.[92]

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[91] Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions*, no. 23.

[92] For more about this point, see also Article Five, no. 3.5.

Conclusion

Inculturation of liturgy is a gradual, organic and ongoing process, involving the entire Christian community; it cannot be imposed by ecclesiastical authorities or produced by experts. Since the Syro-Malabar Church now extends to the confines of India and abroad, there is the challenge of inculturation of the Gospel and liturgy in other parts of India and in other countries. Moreover, in this twenty-first century of hyperglobalization different societies are in mutual interaction and constant evolution, even engendering the modernization and progress of primitive cultures. The Church has also to cope with such evolutionary process, without being entangled in cultural conservatism and immutable archaism. Considering all these aspects the aforementioned ten principles are proposed, which may guide the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church to adopt the right path in their efforts of inculturation in life, and especially in liturgy.

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THE LITURGICAL HERITAGE OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH:
Shadows and Realities

This book pivots on three main themes: inculturation, liturgical reform and the direction of the celebrant during the Holy Mass, although it touches also some other aspects of the liturgical heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church. Really these two questions have been the root causes of disputes, indiscipline and anarchy among some sections of the clergy and the Christian faithful, which have tormented this Church for more than five decades. The present work not only traces the origin and historical evolution of the said problems, but also highlights the advancement of the restoration and reform of liturgy, distinguishing shadows from realities and striving to enucleate some guidelines and orientational paradigms for future action.

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